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MARCH 24, 2008

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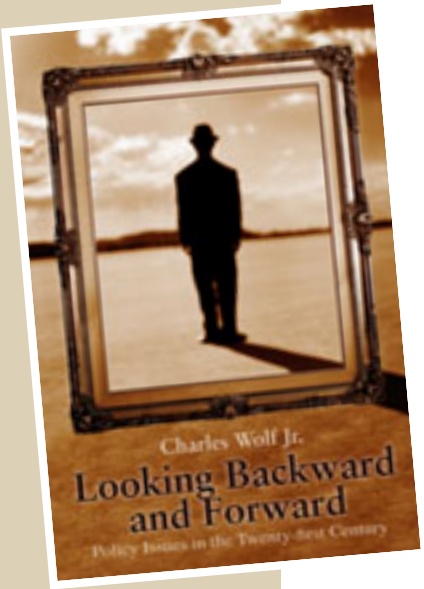

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Howard's End

The Scrapbook has historically subscribed to the old Latin epigram *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*—"Let nothing be said of the dead but what is good"—but the passing last week of 90-year-old former senator Howard Metzenbaum, Democrat of Ohio, did prompt our colleague, Philip Terzian, to reach back into his copious book of memories.

"I have two poignant recollections of Howard Metzenbaum," he tells us. "The first involves his debut as a member of the world's greatest deliberative body. It will be recalled that Metzenbaum was appointed to the Senate when President Nixon recruited Senator William Saxbe of Ohio to succeed Elliot Richardson as attorney general after the famous 'Saturday Night Massacre.'

"Saxbe, of course, was a Republican, and the Democratic governor of Ohio was an amiable hack named John Gilligan. The fact that this reduced the GOP minority in the Senate by yet another seat, and elevated Metzenbaum—whose obnoxious manner and sharp business practices in Cleveland had not gone unnoticed—left some injured feelings on the Republican side. So, on the morning of January 21, 1974, when Metzenbaum arrived on the floor to be sworn in, Senator Carl Curtis (R-Nebraska) rose to introduce some now-forgotten objection and demand a vote on his admission to the club.

"From my perspective, in the press gallery, it was an amusing spectacle. A sizable throng of Metzenbaum's friends and family had assembled in the visitors' box for the occasion, but their joy turned swiftly to horror as Curtis—hitherto famous largely for his bald head, short stature, and habit of wearing a four-in-hand tie without a knot—threw sand in the machinery and appeared determined to delay Metzenbaum's debut until his grievances had been satisfied.

"In the end, a vote was taken, and the tally was handed to the presiding officer, the newly minted Vice President Gerald Ford, who announced from the chair that X votes had been cast to seat Metzenbaum and Y votes (a substantial majority) not to seat him.

"There was the proverbial pregnant pause, and then an audible gasp from the Metzenbaum claque as they realized they had traveled all the way from Ohio for nothing! And yet, once the agonizing truth had sunk in, Vice President Ford—with his signature, Homer Simpson-style 'Oh!'—announced, after hurried consultation with the clerks, that he had accidentally reversed the numbers, and Metzenbaum was in.

"Now the sound from the visitors' gallery was relief and applause, and Howard Metzenbaum stepped forward to become a senator—for less than a year, as it turned out, subsequently losing his bid for a full term and not gaining election in his own right until 1976. And the rest is history, as they say. But I shall always cherish those few seconds in the Watergate Winter of 1974 when the Senate of the United States, after due deliberation, rejected the presence of Howard Metzenbaum.

"There is, I hasten to add, a heartening postcript to the story. Years later, when I was seated in the business section of a transatlantic flight—having been bumped, for no good reason, up from steerage—I was approached, before takeoff, by a pleasant flight attendant who asked if I might be willing to exchange places with a U.S. senator stuck in tourist class.

"'Who?' I inquired.

"'It's Senator Metzenbaum,' she replied.

"At which point, raising my flute of complimentary champagne in memory of Carl Curtis, I replied, with a smile, 'No, thanks.'" ♦

China Gets De-Listed

Maybe the State Department has good seats for the upcoming Olympics in Beijing and doesn't want to do anything that might jeopardize them. How else to explain China's removal from the department's annual list of worst human rights offenders? North Korea is on the list, as are Cuba, Iran, and Sudan. So what about China? Jonathan Farrar, the acting assistant secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor was asked this very question and told a reporter:

> I think if you look at the introduction to the report . . . that [China's] human rights record remains poor. It describes how controls were tightened in some areas in China, particularly regarding religious freedom in Tibetan areas and in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. It also describes controls on freedom of speech in the media, including on the Internet and the difficulty that petitioners in Beijing face. . . . So I think if you look at the report, you'll see it's a comprehensive one and gives a very frank appraisal on the status of human rights.

The reporter was just as confused as we are and asked, "Is it because China is no longer considered the—as authoritarian as it was last year or is that the reason?" Farrar replied: "I think actually if you look at the introduction, it may—I think it's described in exactly those terms."

So China is still an oppressive regime, but things are getting better? We're guessing the Tibetan monks and pro-independence demonstrators currently battling Chinese security forces in Lhasa would see things a little differently. ♦

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of June 26, 2000)

Happy Anniversary, SDI

The Scrapbook sends birthday wishes to Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, which turned 25 years old on March 23. It was on that day in 1983 when Reagan delivered the televised address in which he rejected the nightmarish logic of mutually assured destruction and instead proposed a ballistic missile shield that would protect America from attack. Reagan's speech not only shocked liberals, it also shook the Soviet Union—already shuddering under the burden of huge defense expenditures amid a collapsing economy—to its core.

As Vice President Dick Cheney noted in a speech last week to the Heritage Foundation marking the anniversary, the world remains a dangerous place. When America signed the (now defunct) Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 1972, nine countries possessed ballistic missile technology. Today, three times as many have such missiles. Many of those countries are enemies of the United States.

Which is to say: Missile defense is as relevant today as it was in 1983. And it is just as necessary. Here's to another 25 years. ♦

David Mamet Talks of Many Things

Since the press has an eerie fascination with apostate Republicans (Kevin Phillips, David Gergen, David Brock), we consider it our duty to draw attention to a compelling essay, in the current *Village Voice*, by playwright David Mamet, in which he declares that he is "no longer a brain-dead liberal."

As you might expect, a brief summary of Mr. Mamet's *cri de couer* does not really do it justice; and in fairness, while he manifestly is "no longer a brain-dead liberal," it might be premature to describe him as conservative. Still, when the author of *Speed-the-Plow* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* explains his change of heart about free markets, the role of government, National Public Radio, and the status of the military in American society—he even calls Thomas Sowell "our greatest contemporary philosopher"—we can heartily commend his piece to readers.

And with a tip of the fedora, we welcome him to provisional status in the club. Mr. Mamet, we know what it's like to feel the rising hairs on one's neck at the sound of Garrison Keillor. And we feel some pride, perhaps even excitement, at the prospect of another recruit to the ranks of conservative writers. Trading Kevin Phillips and David Brock and David Gergen for David Mamet gives our side a prohibitive lead. ♦

Barefoot in the Park

According to the *Daily Telegraph*, "Dutch council officials will permit gay sex in public areas" of Amsterdam's Vondelpark, though Alderman Paul van Grieken stressed that "condoms must always be cleared away" and the sex can only occur at night and away from playgrounds. Unleashed dogs, however, remain strictly forbidden. Why? As van Grieken explains, "Research shows that many people find this disturbing." ♦

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Casual

The Rules of Grandparenting

My view is, the more grandchildren, the better. I have six with a seventh due in April. And I assume there are more to come. My daughter Grace just had her first child in February—a boy named Paul—and my son Freddy is only now finishing college at Auburn and isn't married yet.

Grandchildren are one of God's greatest gifts. But there's more to having grandchildren—that is, being a grandparent—than simply keeping track of them, which is hard enough. There are rules to follow, and I'm afraid I'm not doing a very good job. Though my oldest grandchild, a beautiful girl named Grace, is 8, I'm still in the learning phase of grandparenthood.

The first rule is you don't get to choose what your grandkids call you. You may want to be called "Gramps" or "Pops" but if they don't like the name, you'll be called something else.

My grandchildren couldn't reach a consensus on what to call me. So my wife Barbara offered a suggestion: Bus, short for Buster. This was my nickname when I was an infant after my grandmother looked at me in a baby stroller and declared, "Buster."

Of course about three people in the universe still call me that. My wife doesn't. Even my sister calls me "Fred" these days. But my grandchildren instantly embraced the name. It's simple and punchy. So I'm Bus.

The second rule is that a grandparent does not get to act like a parent. A grandparent has a different role. A parent is nice and loving but also tough. A grandparent is only nice and loving. A parent disciplines and is entitled to raise his voice with his children. A grandparent isn't.

I learned this the hard way. When I spoke sharply (and loudly) to my grandson John, 6, he looked shocked. Who did I think I was? His parent? After this happened a second time, Barbara took me aside to explain my role. Raising my voice with grandchildren is not allowed, not ever.

DARREN GYGI

For some grandparents, rule three may be a stretch. It's this: Never forget that your grandchildren are smarter than you are. They know things you don't. And it can be embarrassing when they display their superior knowledge in front of others.

Just the other day, John—the grandson I yelled at—recited the birthdays not only of his two siblings, Grace and Luke, 4, but also of his cousins and aunts and uncles. This is the kind of family information I am supposed to know, but don't. All I could do was listen in shame as John delivered names and dates.

At age 5, another grandson, Troup, knows more about nature and small animals than I could ever hope to. He fearlessly picks up frogs and snakes and newts and salamanders, animals I'd rather not touch. Troup, by the way, is a family name that has come down from my mother's father, Troup Miller, a West Pointer from Georgia.

It took me a while to notice the best example of how smart grandchildren are. They know exactly what is most precious to a grandparent and that's what they want. It's not money or a trip to the ice cream store or a new toy. It's your time.

The older I get, the more I understand that time is the commodity I have the least of and thus value the most. My grandchildren discover this around age 2. Then they want to visit Barbara and me and stay overnight, alone. They want undivided attention, preferring we don't spread our time among the other grandchildren. This may seem selfish. I find it endearing.

The final rule: A grandparent is expected to get on the floor and play with grandchildren. Barbara is great at this. I'm not. My son claims I spent my entire time as his parent sitting in a chair and reading a newspaper. Well, I like reading the paper.

We all know how different one's own children can be. This is all the more true about grandchildren. In personality and wrestling style, Troup and his brother Will, 3, are anything but the same. And when my daughter Karen has her third child in April—it's a boy—I don't expect him to fit a family mold. There isn't one.

One of life's great rewards is to see your children, once grown, become close friends. Just as rewarding is watching your grandchildren bond, as mine have. This has happened despite my reluctance to get on the floor with them.

Fred Barnes

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the weekly Standard

Gunsmoke

Late last week, the Defense Department released an analysis of 600,000 documents captured in Iraq prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses, a federally funded think tank. Here's the attention-grabbing sentence from the report's executive summary: "This study found no 'smoking gun' (i.e. direct connection) between Saddam's Iraq and al Qaeda."

Relying on a leak of the executive summary, ABC News reported that the study was "the first official acknowledgment from the U.S. military that there is no evidence Saddam had ties to Al Qaeda." There followed a brief item in the *Washington Post* that ran under the headline "Study Discounts Hussein, Al-Qaeda Link." The *New York Times* announced: "Study Finds No Qaeda-Hussein Tie." NPR agreed: "Study Finds No Link Between Saddam, bin Laden."

And the Bush administration reacted with an apparently guilty silence.

But here's the truth. The executive summary of the report is extraordinarily misleading. The full report, released Thursday night, states, for example, on page 42: "Saddam supported groups that either associated directly with al Qaeda (such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led at one time by bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri) or that generally shared al Qaeda's stated goals and objectives." In fact, as Stephen F. Hayes reports in this issue, the study outlines a startling range of connections between Saddam and various organizations associated with al Qaeda and other terror groups.

But don't take our word for it: Go to *http://a.abcnews.com/images/pdf/Pentagon_Report_V1.pdf* and read the 59 pages of analysis for yourself. You'll see, in the words of the authors, "strong evidence that links the regime of Saddam Hussein to regional and global terrorism." And, from the report's conclusion:

> The rise of Islamist fundamentalism in the region gave Saddam the opportunity to make terrorism, one of the few tools remaining in Saddam's "coercion" toolbox, not only cost effective but a formal instrument of state power. Saddam nurtured this capability with an infrastructure supporting (1) his own particular brand of state terrorism against internal and external threats, (2) the state sponsorship of suicide operations, and (3) organizational relationships and "outreach programs" for terrorist groups. Evidence that was uncovered and analyzed attests to the existence of a terrorist capability and a willingness to use it until the day Saddam was forced to flee Baghdad by Coalition forces.

Take a look also at the documents showing links between Saddam Hussein and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Apparently whoever wrote the executive summary didn't consider the link between Saddam and al Zawahiri a "direct connection" because Egyptian Islamic Jihad had not yet, in the early 1990s, fully been incorporated into al Qaeda. Of course, by that standard, evidence of support provided to Osama bin Laden in the early 1990s might not be deemed a "direct connection" because al Qaeda as we know it today did not yet exist.

If you talk to people in the Bush administration, they know the truth about the report. They know that it makes the case convincingly for Saddam's terror connections. But they'll tell you (off the record) it's too hard to try to set the record straight. Any reengagement on the case for war is a loser, they'll say. Furthermore, once the first wave of coverage is bad, you can never catch up: You give the misleading stories more life and your opponents further chances to beat you up in the media. And as for trying to prevent misleading summaries and press leaks in the first place—that's hopeless. Someone will tell the media you're behaving like Scooter Libby, and God knows what might happen next.

So, this week's fifth anniversary of the start of the Iraq war will bring us countless news stories reexamining the case for war, with the White House essentially pleading *nolo contendere*. Even though there is abundant evidence that Iraq was a serious state sponsor of terrorism—and would almost certainly have become a greater one if Saddam had been left in power—most Americans will assume there was no real Saddam-terror connection. After all, they haven't heard the Bush administration say otherwise.

The president has a responsibility to help the American people understand the nature of the threat we faced in 2003 and the threats we face today—how terror groups work, the extent of state sponsorship, and how that sponsorship transcends Sunni-Shia or secular-jihadist differences.

It's not too late. Bush can still override his cautious aides and tell the American people the whole truth about the situation we faced in 2003 and would face today if Saddam were still in power. This is more than a matter of political advantage. It is a requirement of war leadership.

—*William Kristol*

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Character Is Destiny

Client 9 crashes and burns.

BY MICHAEL GOODWIN & FRED SIEGEL

A popular media narrative last week was that the sordid revelations that brought down New York governor Eliot Spitzer were a total shock to New Yorkers because he was universally regarded as a paragon of probity. The prostitution scandal was the fall of Mr. Clean, as CNN and Reuters put it. We were repeatedly reminded that *Time* had once dubbed him "Crusader of the Year." The juxtaposition of the Spitzer who made morals and ethics the hallmark of his career with the hooker-loving married man caught with his pants down was presented as a delicious morality tale.

While the details of his demise truly were dramatic, there is a flaw in the fallen crusader narrative. By the time Spitzer fell, it was only the liberal media that still thought of him as Mr. Clean. They alone still saw a political rock star and a savior of the Democratic party. (The *New York Times* and the *New Republic* had talked of "Spitzerism" as the path to the party's future.) In their minds, his image as the "Sheriff of Wall Street" was etched in stone.

Most New Yorkers, though, had long had their fill of Eliot Spitzer. Polls over the last six months had consistently shown that even a majority of Democrats wanted someone else as governor. In the last poll taken before the sex scandal hit, only a quarter of the respondents said they would vote for Spitzer again. With three years to go in his term, the hunt was already on for a replacement. New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg was the most popular pick, walloping Spitzer in polls.

It was a remarkable turnaround for someone elected in a landslide after a 2006 campaign in which he was never seriously challenged. His Obama-like campaign slogan was "Day One, Everything Changes." With the sizing-up skill of a Times Square bunko artist, he had a knack for telling people what they wanted to hear about a dysfunctional state capital. Five months before the election, he said that just as "Only Nixon could go to China," only a tough-minded Democrat like himself could reform Albany, vowing, "We will turn that world upside down. We are absolutely going to sweep it out."

> Eliot Spitzer couldn't get out of his own way. His volcanic outbursts, inept management, and penchant for incessant dishonesty and hypocrisy rendered him unfit in a political blink of the eye.

He went up against a competent opponent in the primary, Nassau County executive Tom Suozzi, but won with 81 percent of the vote. Ditto for the general election, where Spitzer gained nearly 70 percent against former Republican assemblyman John Faso. When he took office in January 2007, Spitzer looked to be on his way to the White House.

Despite what some of his apologists maintain, the relentless unraveling of his administration was not driven by inexperience or political mistakes or even entrenched opponents. The cause of Spitzer's troubles was always the same: his character flaws. Character is destiny, and he couldn't get out of his own way. His volcanic outbursts, inept management, and penchant for incessant dishonesty and hypocrisy rendered him unfit in a political blink of the eye. He also grew increasingly risky in his public behavior—consulting no one, for instance, when he pushed for driver's licenses for illegal immigrants despite overwhelming public opposition and despite the embarassment this brought to Hillary Clinton whom he had endorsed for the Democratic nomination. Now we know he was reckless in private as well.

Like Alexei in Dostoyevsky's *Gambler*, Spitzer couldn't but act in a "reckless and unseemly way." Emboldened by his successes and oblivious to his defeats, he pushed his luck and raised the stakes. Talking about his long association with hookers, some said he was so riven with inner conflicts he wanted to get caught. More likely, he believed he was too smart to get caught. Either way, he prospered so long as the only assessment that mattered was that of allies in the press and in politics. But once he became governor and entered a more level playing field where opponents had real power to strike back, he was in over his head.

Not everyone caught on immediately, of course, and for good reason. Eliot Spitzer, it turns out, was a world-class con man and had the ability to fool many people for some of the time. Like a shooting star, he was brilliant while he lasted. While his eight years as attorney general looked to be a stepping stone to greater and greater glory, it was, instead, all downhill from there. His approval ratings started falling in the first weeks of his becoming governor and never recovered.

Michael Goodwin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, is a columnist for the New York Daily News *and a contributor to CNN. Fred Siegel, a contributing editor of* City Journal, *is a professor at the Cooper Union for Science & Art.*

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GARY LOCKE

He was so obviously off course that it was possible to compare him to New Jersey governor Jim ("I am a gay American") McGreevey, who had been forced to resign in his third year in office. Spitzer, Michael Goodwin noted in October 2007, "is moving downhill faster and earlier than McGreevey did. Unless he gets his act together, he could meet the same end and have the same legacy."

Con men, of course, are not unique to politics. Business produced the Enron crowd, religion gave us Jimmy Swaggart, and Jayson Blair proved that journalists are capable of the big con. Spitzer's con was different only in his chosen field. He knew how to play on the desires of his victims and succeeded because the voters, the unions, the special interest groups, and the liberal media were willing victims.

At different times he presented himself as a centrist Democrat, as a progressive Democrat, and as a conservative Democrat. He was none of the above. Positions and policies didn't matter to him. He was in it for the game itself, as though debates over public policy and legislation were like chess matches or touch football. As Congressman Charlie Rangel put it, Spitzer always thinks he's the "smartest man in the room."

Spitzer had reason to think he would never be called to account. He was elected attorney general by breaking the campaign finance laws and then lying about it (as we noted in The Weekly Standard of August 20, 2007). After making his reputation by exposing double dealing at brokerage firms like Merrill Lynch, Spitzer began to use leaks and, ironically, sexual innuendo to force firms to pay huge settlements or face a public trial at the hands of an enraptured media.

When Spitzer went after New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso for what the attorney general saw as an excessively generous buyout package, he refused to criticize fellow Democrat Carl McCall, the former New York State comptroller and the man most responsible for the Grasso package. That alone should have raised red flags, but it didn't.

It wasn't until July 2007, when the *New York Post*'s Fred Dicker broke the first stories on Spitzer's attempt to use the state police to bring down a Republican political rival, Senate majority leader Joe Bruno, that the already manifest problems with Spitzer's character began to draw widespread attention. That scandal has still not been resolved because Spitzer has never been forced to testify despite the Albany district attorney empaneling a grand jury to sort out the mess.

In August, we noted in these pages that Spitzer "is already damaged politically, perhaps beyond repair. Any new sordid details could finish him. With his reputation shredded and his administration under fire, he is now in desperate need of a savior himself."

The con has been revealed and the crusader is beyond redemption. Some of his old supporters on the left, wallowing in their glorious hopes for him, are calling Spitzer's fall a tragedy. They are wrong. Tragedy requires an initial nobility of purpose. ♦

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Why We Went into Iraq

The question McCain must answer.

BY PETER D. FEAVER

On the night that John McCain secured the Republican nomination, he said about Iraq that "it is of little use to Americans for their candidates to avoid the many complex challenges of these struggles by re-litigating decisions of the past."

He is right that it would be a mistake for his campaign to focus on the past at the expense of the future. Either of his Democratic opponents will be on far more vulnerable terrain defending the incoherencies of their proposed plans to "end" the war than if they get to cherry-pick debates from the past with the benefit of hindsight.

But there are at least four reasons why Senator McCain would be making a mistake if he avoided entirely the historical debate.

First and foremost, the historical case remains an important factor in determining votes. In these times, political leaders are asking voters two questions: Will you vote for me, and do you have the stomach for continuing this costly war? As two colleagues (Christopher Gelpi and Jason Reifler) and I show in a forthcoming book, public opinion on both those questions is a function of two underlying attitudes: the retrospective opinion of whether the war was a mistake, and the prospective opinion of whether the war can ultimately be won.

Peter D. Feaver is Alexander F. Hehmeyer professor of political science at Duke University. From 2005-2007, he was special adviser for strategic planning and institutional reform at the National Security Council.

The retrospective and prospective judgments work in tandem, but have different weights depending on whether you are trying to predict support for continuing the war or vote choice. In 2004, the prospective attitude (will we win) was the long pole in the tent for supporting the continuation of the war, but the retrospective attitude (was it the right thing) was the long pole in the tent in determining presidential choice. Put simply, President Bush beat Senator Kerry in part because, at that time, a majority of Americans said they still supported the original decision to invade. To win voters, McCain may have to address their concerns about the original decision to invade Iraq.

Second, even if you are focusing narrowly on shoring up public support for continuing the mission, the historical case matters. People who think the war was the right thing and also think we will succeed have a stronger stomach for continuing American efforts than people who think it was a mistake but still think it is winnable.

For the public to believe that a commander in chief can bring the Iraq war to a successful conclusion, they must have a strong degree of trust in that leader. If the public only hears unrebutted attacks about the original decision to invade Iraq, the lies and myths will take hold and undermine public confidence in the continuing effort in Iraq.

For instance, after the 2004 election, the Bush administration largely stopped "relitigating the past" and focused almost all of its Iraq messages on the future. The Democrats, in contrast, kept up a barrage of partisan attacks about the original decision. The Bush *nolo contendere* stance may have been interpreted by many Americans as tantamount to a guilty plea. Is it any surprise, therefore, that according to one CBS/*NYT* poll last year, as many as 60 percent of respondents said they thought "members of the Administration intentionally misled the public" in making its case for the war with Iraq whereas before the 2004 election (when the Bush team was making a stronger defense) only 44 percent believed that myth.

Third, the historical case for invading Iraq is much stronger than conventional wisdom pretends. It is not as strong as the administration thought in 2002, but it is far stronger than the average listener to late-night comics or talking heads—i.e., a normal American—might think today. Despite strenuous efforts, war critics have not come up with well-substantiated cases of the administration saying something that it knew was not true or had no evidentiary basis for believing was true. Of course, there are many cases of the administration saying things that turned out to be not true. But moving the public from "you were lying" to "you were mistaken" would be significant progress. And moving it all the way to "you had

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understandable reasons for your policy" could be game-changing.

Finally, the failure to defend the historical case has allowed Democrats to avoid answering tough questions about their own stances. Senator Obama, for instance, loves to praise his own judgment in coming out against the Iraq war in 2002, favoring instead containing Saddam Hussein with a vigorous weapons inspections regime. What Obama has never explained is how he thought the United States could reconstitute the containment/inspections regime absent a credible threat of force. When Obama gave his 2002 speech, there were no inspectors on the ground in Iraq and the U.N. sanctions were falling apart. It was the U.S. threat of force—the very threat Obama was protesting—that reinvigorated the Security Council and reestablished the inspections regime.

McCain cannot stake his entire candidacy on trying to persuade people to support the original war decision. After several years of one-sided propaganda, American attitudes on this are fairly entrenched and unlikely to move much. But he shouldn't cede the ground without a fight.

In his victory speech, McCain showed that he understood this because he went on to say, "I will defend the decision to destroy Saddam Hussein's regime as I criticized the failed tactics that were employed for too long to establish the conditions that will allow us to leave that country with our country's interests secure and our honor intact."

Avoiding the historical case won't trick Obama or Clinton into relaxing their relentless Iraq-oriented attacks on McCain. For Obama, his one speech opposing the Iraq invasion is the solitary piece of evidence that he has the foreign policy experience worthy of a commander in chief. Obama and Clinton will deliver their Iraq talking points no matter what. The real question is whether Americans can hear from McCain a more persuasive historical case on Iraq than we have heard in years. Yes, yes we can. ♦

Democrats for Boeing

The truth about the tanker deal.

BY CHRISTIAN LOWE

It was one of those insider deals that give the defense industry a bad name, conjuring up images of smoke-filled negotiations between the brass and corporate fat cats in plush leather chairs. By the time it was over, two fat cats were in jail, a top Pentagon official had been forced to resign, a corporate CEO had lost his job, and the reputation of an iconic company that had served American troops for decades had suffered irreparable damage.

Then it turned out it wasn't entirely over. In a twist of fate that only election year politics could weave, the same nefarious deal is now being eulogized as a wasted opportunity, and the man largely responsible for scuttling it—the Republican nominee for president—is being vilified as a cold-blooded globalizer who cost America 40,000 jobs.

It's hard to believe so much controversy has surrounded such an unremarkable plane. For upwards of 50 years, the Air Force has maintained a fleet of over 500 tanker aircraft that act as airborne gas stations—originally, for squadrons of Cold War-era B-52s headed for targets in the Soviet Union. The Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker and McDonnell Douglas (now owned by Boeing) KC-10 Extender were militarized versions of the 707 and DC-10 passenger planes. Because the tanker fleet was based on built-to-last commercial designs, the Air Force was able to buy a lot of planes for a relatively low cost and keep them flying longer than if it had used a purely military design.

The ability to refuel in midair is one of America's "asymmetrical" advantages in war—and peace. The stunning victory during Desert Storm was in large part due to the use of overwhelming airpower. It wouldn't have been possible without a lot of aerial tankers flying day and night. In that war, over 300 tankers flew 16,865 missions delivering 800 million pounds of gas in over 51,000 midair refuelings. Same goes for the aerial wars over Serbia and Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom—lots of tankers, lots of sorties, and lots of flight time.

Which means lots of wear and tear. The Air Force saw the writing on the wall in the late 1990s and convinced Congress to provide some money to replace the KC-10s and KC-135s. And that's when the double-dealing started.

What the Air Force eventually presented to Congress was a deal to lease 100 militarized versions of the commercially successful Boeing 767 jetliner for about $30 billion rather than conduct a competition and buy new planes. Around 2011, the service would pay off the lease and keep the aircraft—the ultimate "rent-to-own" scheme.

The Air Force argued that this was the only way to get tankers quickly; if Congress forced a design competition and the construction of a whole new plane the process could take decades. The Government Accountability Office and the Pentagon's own internal investigations disagreed, arguing taxpayers would overpay Boeing about $6 billion under the lease/buy arrangement. On the face of it, this looked like a bad deal.

Despite the convoluted nature of

Christian Lowe is managing editor of military.com.

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the setup—or perhaps because of it—Congress budgeted money to start the lease in 2001, pending the approval of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. That's when a sharp-eyed staffer for John McCain raised a red flag, alerting the senator to what appeared to be an insider deal. McCain demanded hearings, eventually strong-arming the Air Force into a more thorough examination of the alternatives for replacing the much-needed tankers and forcing the service to adhere to acquisition laws. Then, the bottom dropped out.

After a series of internal inquiries—and some fantastic investigative reporting by the defense trade press—it emerged that the Boeing tanker lease deal was rotten to the core. It had been negotiated by then-Air Force acquisitions chief Darleen Druyun, who inked the agreement after receiving a promise from Boeing to hire her as a senior executive after she left the Air Force. Druyun and the Boeing official who negotiated the employment deal with her, Michael Sears, were both eventually convicted and sent to prison, and Boeing chief Phil Condit was forced to resign along with Air Force secretary James Roche.

So the Air Force scrapped its tanker-lease scheme and conducted an open competition for a new tanker. The result was announced on February 29: A consortium of Northrop Grumman and European Aeronautic Defense and Space Co. had beaten Boeing for the $40 billion contract to build nearly 200 new tankers. That meant the primary builder of America's next tanker fleet would be the European company Airbus, which had offered a militarized version of its successful A330 commercial airliner. The award set off a protectionist furor in Congress—mostly in the House—involving all the predictable players.

On March 5, the powerful chairman of the House Appropriations Committee's defense panel, John Murtha, summoned Air Force officials to explain their decision to award the contract to Airbus. The hearing was a circus of accusations and I-told-you-so's, with mostly Democratic lawmakers lecturing top Air Force officials on how they should have reached their decision. Through it all, the service's top acquisition official, Sue Payton, stuck to her guns, repeatedly telling the bitter lawmakers she had adhered strictly to contracting laws and that, in the end, the Northrop Grumman/EADS team had "brought their A-game."

It was Murtha, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, who lathered on the criticism of McCain, blaming him for outsourcing American defense business, delaying the Air Force's tanker replacement, and costing the United States a purported 40,000 jobs.

Aerospace Machinists Union members protesting in Everett, Washington, February 29, 2008

"Because of the individual in the other body stopping what the Air Force and this committee agreed to is [sic] costing billions of dollars, and we're at a point where we don't know how long it's going to take to get these [KC-135s] out of the air," Murtha whined, blaming McCain instead of the Air Force or Boeing for the entire fiasco.

Despite the winners' claim that 25,000 new American jobs will be created by the deal and that about 60 percent of the plane will be made in the United States, both Democratic presidential candidates have criticized the award and hinted that McCain is to blame. And Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi threw her own political grenade at the Republican nominee.

"Senator McCain intervened, and now we have a situation where contracts may be—this work may be outsourced," she said.

As usual, McCain is refusing to budge, reminding the public that the earlier Air Force deal he fought was rotten and that his dogged exposure of it saved the government money. What's more, if the Democrats are campaigning on ethical purity, how ironic is it that they would have parochialism and pressure from unions trump the fair and lawful competitive bidding that produced the Airbus win?

"I intervened in a process that was clearly corrupt," McCain said at a campaign event in early March. "That's why people went to jail. That's why the Government Accountability Office said that I saved the taxpayers over $6 billion."

On March 11, Boeing filed a formal protest of the Northrop Grumman/EADS award to the GAO, which handles such acquisition challenges, citing "irregularities" that "placed Boeing at a competitive disadvantage." So, now there's political hay to be made over the issue of lost jobs and "outsourcing" while the auditors pore over Boeing's complaint—a process that is likely to play out through the November election. Democrats will try to damage McCain's prospects in "red" states like Kansas—where the Boeing tanker was to be assembled—and Missouri—where the Boeing division that designed the tanker is headquartered—by waving the bloody shirt of exported jobs.

As defense budget watchdog and Capitol Hill veteran Winslow Wheeler said last week of the upcoming political battle: "If Boeing wants to go down the road in Congress, we're in for a real food fight. Boeing has 40 states involved in the 767 contracting; Northrop Grumman has 49. That's not going to be a pretty thing to watch." ♦

AP PHOTO / STEPHEN BRASHEAR

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The Unions Go to Town…

…and bankrupt America's cities. BY STEPHEN MOORE

It didn't get much attention on the East Coast, but in late February the town of Vallejo, California, came within an eyelash of becoming the first city since Bridgeport, Connecticut, back in 1991 to declare bankruptcy. This San Francisco Bay suburb of 120,000 residents was threatening to take this radical step because it can no longer afford to pay the extravagant salary and retirement benefits of its public employees. Just a few hours before the city council was to file for bankruptcy, the unions caved in and granted wage concessions to keep the city operational.

There are several other cities in California that are contemplating the bankruptcy option thanks to multi-billion-dollar public employee pension and health care obligations that have become effectively unpayable. "Vallejo's fiscal problems aren't unique. They're just the tip of the debt iceberg here in California," says Keith Richman, a former state legislator and now president of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility (CFFR). The California Public Employees' Retirement System has $26 billion of unfunded liabilities. The teachers' retirement system is $20 billion in the red—health benefits add another $48 billion to its shortfall.

Welcome to the next great financial bubble in America—a fiscal time bomb that could cause your local and state tax bills to double or even triple in years to come.

Vallejo's story of financial woe raises eyebrows because it is not a desperately poor or dilapidated city like Newark or Detroit. It is quintessential middle-class America, with an average family income of about $57,000. When the city announced it wouldn't be able to meet $6 million of unpaid bills starting in April, no one was as surprised as the residents themselves. Part of the problem is that the real estate crisis is especially pronounced in California and, as housing values fall, so do city property tax collections. The city projects a $20 million budget shortfall this year and next, which is a big bucket of red ink out of an annual budget of $80 million. City officials saw bankruptcy as the only legal option to void its unsustainable wage and retirement labor contracts and their $135 million of unfunded liabilities.

> Many California cities have a 3 percent rule which allows a worker to accrue a pension benefit of 3 percent of his final salary for each year worked. So an employee who started on the job at age 22 can retire at age 52 with a lifetime pension benefit of 90 percent of the final salary.

These contracts are so exorbitant that some of the richest residents of Vallejo are the police and firemen. Ten firemen earned more than $200,000 last year with overtime—a salary nearly four times higher than what the average family in Vallejo earns. Incredibly, 80 percent of the city's budget is consumed by labor and pension costs. "No city or private person wants to declare bankruptcy," says Councilwoman Stephanie Gomes, "but if you're facing insolvency, you have no choice but to seek protection."

Soaring public employee pension costs are crunching municipal budgets and causing service cuts or tax hikes across the state. In the Los Angeles County school system, health, pension, and workers compensation liabilities are so mountainous that an estimated one of every three dollars budgeted for the L.A. schools goes to teacher retirement costs. "The three Rs in the L.A. County school system are now reading, writing, and retirement," moans Richman.

There are other horror stories. The CFFR found that many cities have a 3 percent rule which allows a worker to accrue a pension benefit of 3 percent of his final salary for each year worked. So an employee who started on the job at age 22 can retire at age 52 with a lifetime pension benefit of 90 percent of the final salary. Most California towns also allow city employees to "spike" their pensions. This is a popular scam that allows workers to pad their final salary—and so their pension—by as much as 50 percent through bonuses, overtime, accrued vacation, and other add-ons. These pensions also come with an annual cost of living adjustment and lifetime health care.

"Pensions are the second biggest line item in most municipal budgets today behind law enforcement," says Steven Frates, a professor at Claremont McKenna College and an expert on California's pensions system. He adds that "the annuity value for many public employee pensions in this state is $1.5 million." Some of the highest paid state workers are walking away with lifetime annual pension and health benefits of $300,000 a year. With hundreds of thousands of public employees in California, you have the potential for catastrophic long-term financial distress.

Stephen Moore is senior economics writer for the Wall Street Journal *editorial page.*

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Plenty of cities outside California are facing a similar tsunami of debt thanks to years of super-generous labor agreements. The ten largest Chicago-area cities face a combined $18.7 billion in unfunded pension liabilities, according to a new report by the Chicago Civic Federation. The city of Chicago has less than 50 percent of the money it needs to pay the benefits promised to Chicago police and firemen. Philadelphia was forced to issue a $4.5 billion bond in February to cover unfunded pension liabilities for 33,000 retirees. The total cost to states for paying for all teacher retirement health and pension obligations is now estimated at $3 trillion, and growing each year.

As California taxpayers wake up to the enormous future tax increases they and their children face to pay for expansive promises to city, county, and state workers, they're wondering, says Frates, "how did they get these sweet deals?" There lies the real scandal. For years, even decades, the only people who've cared much about public employee salaries are the public employee unions. The politicians who sit across the table and negotiate with the union bosses have little if any incentive to drive a tough bargain. The costs won't be visible until the politicians who negotiated them are long gone.

Donna Arduin, a former California budget director, explains another reason deals that border on swindles keep getting done: "The public employee unions are far and away the most powerful special interest in the state. They run the state and virtually no politician will stand up to them." She remembers being physically threatened one year when the state was broke and she tried to trim a $400 million bonus in the pensions for corrections officers: "I had to fear for my life."

Nationally, public employees now receive $39.50 an hour in wages and benefits. That's a 50 percent premium over the $26.09 average salary and benefits for private sector workers, according to 2007 Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The gap keeps widening each year. It's true that public employees are more likely to be in white-collar occupations, which receive higher pay, but it's also true that government workers receive a benefit that almost no one in the private sector gets: near 100 percent lifetime job security thanks to arrangements like teacher tenure and government no-fire rules.

In California, taxpayer watchdog groups like the Howard Jarvis Foundation are starting to fight back against the public employee unions. These groups are mobilizing to put an initiative on the ballot called "Proposition 13 for Pensions." It would simply require public employees to work until the age of 65 before they can receive retirement benefits. That's standard fare in the private sector, and the reform would save the state of California and its localities an estimated $500 billion through 2030. No surprise that the unions have pledged to spend millions of dollars to defeat the measure.

The more sensible long-term solution is for cities to immediately abolish these anachronistic guaranteed "defined benefit" pension systems and convert public employees to portable and cost-constrained 401(k)-type pensions. "In the private sector, defined benefit pension structures are rapidly becoming extinct," says financial analyst Dan Clifton of Strategas, a Wall Street advisory firm. "Pretty much only the government still offers them."

But the unions have plenty of political firepower to preserve their pension empire. This year public employee unions are expected to spend $50 to $100 million on political campaigns—as they've been doing for years. No wonder that many politicians behave like fully owned subsidiaries of the unions. So the luxurious benefits of public employees grow more unaffordable each year while the states and cities keep edging closer to the fiscal cliff. Bankruptcy may be their only recourse. Just ask the folks in Vallejo, California. ♦

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The Wit & Wisdom of Barack Obama

Some of it may sound familiar.

By Andrew Ferguson

There's still room for whimsy at the *New Yorker* magazine, I don't care what you've heard. Just the other day two of the *New Yorker*'s bloggers (now there's a phrase to send Harold Ross spinning) were chewing over the widely noted eloquence of Barack Obama. They were struck by "Obama's wonderful line," as one of them described it, to the effect that "We are the ones we've been waiting for." Obama uses it as one of his signature refrains. Some of his followers even turned it into a music video.

So one thing led to another, as it does on blogs, and before long the bloggers began wondering, as they do at the *New Yorker*, what the phrase would sound like in French.

"You couldn't say it in French," blogged one of the bloggers.

"Are you sure about the French?" the other blogger blogged back. "Mine isn't good enough to know if '*C'est nous qui nous avons attendu*' or '*Ceux qui nous attendons, c'est nous*' would sound French to a French ear, or if it just would sound stupid."

Oui, blogged the first blogger. It would sound *très* stupid. "My ear/memory tells me that it would be too weird to say, since I think there's a we/us thing that doesn't work."

Eventually a French journalist was consulted. He ruled summarily that, translated into French, "the Barack Obama sentence [*le sentence de la Barack Obama*] sounds weird to me."

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

So there you have it: You can't really say "We are the ones we've been waiting for" in French. The matter was closed. The bloggers moved on. Good times indeed.

But wait. There was something tantalizingly incomplete about this brief discussion of whether the sentence sounds weird in French: What was missing was an acknowledgment of how weird the sentence sounds in English. What, after all, does "We are the ones we've been waiting for" mean, precisely? My hunch is that the sentence is one of those things that no one will admit to being confused by, like the movies of Godard or the tenor-sax solos of John Coltrane, lest your peers think you're a loser or a moron. Certainly Obama fans won't admit how obscure the sentence is—though several have claimed that it's lifted from a prophecy of the Tribal Elders of the Hopi Indians. Hopi prophecies are famously obscure.

'We are the ones we've been waiting for' is one of those things that no one will admit to being confused by, like the movies of Godard or the tenor-sax solos of John Coltrane, lest your peers think you're a loser or a moron.

But this is just wishful thinking. The origins of the phrase aren't nearly so glamorous or exotic. Two years ago, before Obama even said he wanted to be president, the left-wing-radical-feminist-lesbian novelist Alice Walker published a book of essays and called it *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*. Believe me: If the line had come from the Tribal Elders of the Hopi nation, Alice Walker would have been more than happy to say so. Instead she said it came from a poem published in 1980 by the left-wing-radical-feminist-bisexual poet June Jordan. Neither Walker nor Jordan has said what the sentence means. But

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Barack Obama speaks to supporters at the Salem Baptist Church in Chicago.

AP PHOTO / STEVE MATTEO

Walker did offer this hint in the introduction to her book of essays: "We are the ones we've been waiting for because we are able to see what is happening with a much greater awareness than our parents or grandparents, our ancestors, could see."

That's a clue, anyway. The sentence may not have any positive content, Walker seems to be saying, but it does have an indirect meaning, an implication, as a kind of self-referential gesture for the people who claim it. When Obama's supporters say "We are the ones we've been waiting for," what they mean is that in the long roll call of history, from Aristotle and Heraclitus down through Augustine and Maimonides and Immanuel Kant and the fellows who wrote the Federalist Papers, we're number one! We're the smartest yet! Everybody—Mom, Dad, Gramps and Grandma, Great Grandpa and Great Grandma, maybe even the Tribal Elders—they've all been waiting for people as clued-in as us!

Is this what Obama means too? No one who's wandered through an Obama rally and heard the war whoops and seen the cheerful, vacant gazes would come away thinking, "These are the smartest people ever." I'm sorry, they just aren't. What is unmistakable is the creepy kind of solipsism and the air of self-congratulation that clings to his campaign. "There is something happening," he says in stump speeches. And what's happening? "Change is happening." How so? "The reason our campaign has been different is about what you, the people who love this country, can do to change it." And the way to change it is to join the campaign, which, once you join it, will change America. Because this is *our* moment. The time is *now*. *Now* is the time. Yes, *we* can. We bring change to the campaign because the campaign is about change. *We* are the ones *we've* been waiting for. Obama and his followers are perfecting postmodern reflexivity. It's a campaign that's about itself. The point of the campaign is the campaign.

They don't put it this way, of course, which just confirms a suspicion that's been creeping up on some of us for months: As a speech-giver, a man who has wowed the nation with the power of his language, Barack Obama is getting away with murder. Rhetorically, he is a master of *le baloney*.

It's not clear that Obama himself is even aware of this. His sincerity is self-evident and is one of the qualities that draw people to him, along with those eloquent hands, the grin, that voice as smooth and rich as molasses. His speeches are theatrical events, not intellectual excursions. On his website the videos of his most acclaimed speeches have proved much more popular than the transcripts. As a candidate he fits a public that prefers the sensation of words to the words themselves. His speeches are meant to be succumbed to rather than thought about.

But what if you do think about them?

The first thing you might notice is how familiar Obama's speeches sound on the page. He ran into trouble earlier in the year when he lifted a rhetorical trope from his friend Deval Patrick, the governor of Massachusetts. ("Just words?" Patrick had said, before quoting famous lines from Thomas Jefferson, John Kennedy, and other big talkers.) The charge of plagiarism, made by Obama's opponents, was overheated, and also more complicated than the Clintonites probably realized. David Axelrod, Deval Patrick's campaign manager, came up with the "just words" refrain in 2006, as a way of rebut-

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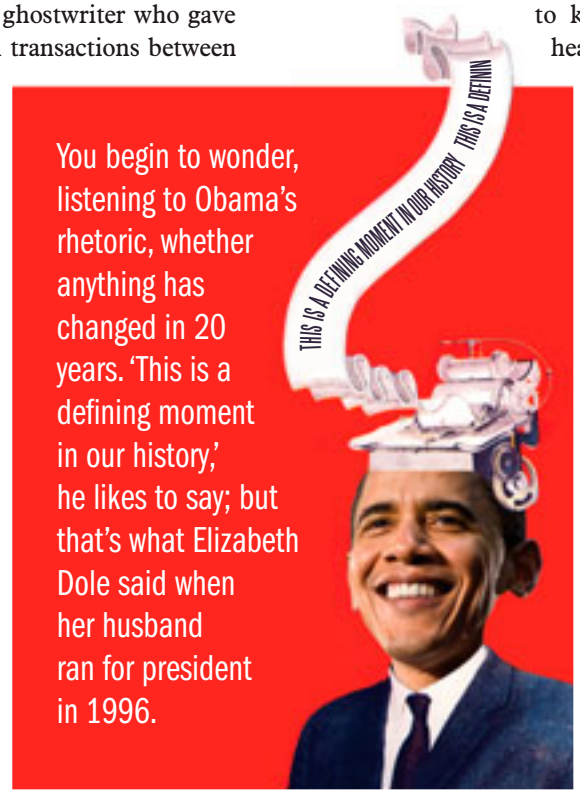
ting charges that his candidate was all talk. Two years later, when Obama was hit with the same charge, he was lucky to have the same campaign manager. Axelrod dusted off the old locution and handed it to his new client. Obama was thus being accused of stealing lines that weren't his from a politician who took them from a ghostwriter who gave them to Obama. In the daisy-chain transactions between politicians and their consultants, there are no property rights.

Besides, the charge of filching betrays a misunderstanding of political speechmaking. Professional public speakers, whether politicians or stand-up comics, take stuff from each other, no matter who penned the words. The line between allusion and theft, between homage and plagiarism, is traditionally thin. When Abraham Lincoln spoke of government of the people, by the people, for the people, his listeners knew Daniel Webster's "Second Reply to Hayne," up to that time the most quoted piece of rhetoric in American history. In it Webster spoke of a government that was "made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." Webster's phrase was part of the public memory, every literate person was familiar with it, and no one would have thought to accuse Lincoln of trying to steal it.

Obama's case is slightly different. When he does filch—notwithstanding the "just words" affair—hardly anyone notices. He lives in an era when the public memory has shrunk to a length of days or weeks. Especially in American politics, policed by a posse of commentators and reporters who crave novelty above all, the past is a blank; every day is Groundhog Day, bringing shocking discoveries of things that have happened over and over again. No politician has benefited from this amnesia as much as Obama. He is credited with revelatory eloquence for using phrases that have been in circulation for years. "Politics is broken," he says in his stump speech, and his audience of starry-eyed college students swoons and the thirtysomething reporters jot excitedly in their notebooks. The rest of us are left to wonder if he's tipping his hat to Bill Bradley, who left the Senate in 1996 because, Bradley said, "politics is broken," or if he's stealing from George W. Bush, who announced in his own stump speech in 2000 that "politics is broken." Obama could be flattering us or snowing us.



You begin to wonder, listening to Obama's rhetoric, whether anything has changed in 20 years. 'This is a defining moment in our history,' he likes to say; but that's what Elizabeth Dole said when her husband ran for president in 1996.

Or perhaps he's just guilty of a lack of originality. On the page, deprived of his baritone, without the prop of his steely jaw, his speeches limp from one shopworn phrase to another. When he tells his audiences they need "a president who will tell you what you need to know, not what you want to hear," he might be quoting, gulp, Geraldine Ferraro, who as a vice presidential candidate in 1984 liked to tell audiences that "leadership is not just telling people what they want to hear, it's telling them what they need to know." It's a timeless principle that can be found in dozens of pop business books, too—the kind read in his formative years by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who used it when he ran for governor in 2003.

Timelessness may be the key here: You begin to wonder, listening to Obama's rhetoric, whether anything has changed in 20 years. "This is a defining moment in our history," Obama likes to say; but that's what Elizabeth Dole said when her husband ran for president in 1996. (They're both wrong.) In 1992, Bill Clinton was complaining that "Washington" was a place "people came to just to score political points." Eight years later Bush was complaining that "Washington is obsessed with scoring political points, not solving problems." Now, in 2008, "Washington has become a place," Obama says, where "politicians spend too much time trying to score political points."

What's to be done about all this Washington point-scoring? Bob Dole's solution, 12 years ago, was to strongly favor "the things that lift this country up instead of dragging it down"; today Obama opposes "the politics where we tear each other down instead of lifting this country up." Because Howard Dean failed in his promise in 2004—"we're going to take this country back"—Obama revives the pledge, word for word, today. But like Gerald Ford, running against Jimmy Carter in 1976, he believes "we can disagree without being disagreeable."

Onward they plod, these old warhorse phrases, until Obama climbs to the climax of his stump speech. Head bowed, brow furrowed, eyes flashing, he announces that we "will choose unity over division [Jesse Jackson, 1992].

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We will choose hope over fear [Bill Clinton and John Kerry, 2004]. And we will choose the future over the past [Al Gore, 1992].” In so doing, we will overcome our “moral deficit [Bush, 2000; Gore, 2000; Newt Gingrich, 1994]” by “bringing people beyond the divisions of race and class [Clinton 1992]” because the “story of our country [Ross Perot, 1992]” or the “genius of our country [Bush 2000]” or the “wonder of our country [George H.W. Bush, 1988]” is, as Obama says in 2008, “ordinary people doing extraordinary things [Perot, Bush, Bush, and Ronald Reagan, 1984].”

Talk like this is the elevator music of politics, soothing and inoffensive and unavoidable. Obama has had the unbelievable luck to attract listeners who seem to think he’s minted it fresh. Indeed, among his opponents, the most common criticism of Obama’s speeches is not that they are hackneyed but that they are short on detail—details of policy in particular. This isn’t completely true; a few proposals can always be picked out from the texts, like seeds from a clump of cotton. In nearly every speech I’ve read, Obama mentions withdrawing troops from Iraq, raising marginal tax rates on “all the wealthy people,” dropping poor old people from the tax rolls, and giving every college student $4,000 a year in return for a pledge of community service. He always mentions eliminating tax subsidies that encourage U.S. companies to build plants overseas, while offering tax subsidies to companies that don’t do that. How each of these would work as a practical policy is left to his audience’s imagination—could you really have a federal program that gives money to every company that stays where it is?—but there’s nothing new about that, either: People don’t come to a rally to hear a candidate read a white paper from the Brookings Institution, unless they work at the Brookings Institution.

Chalonda Marcus cries as she listens to her candidate in Dallas.

VERNON BRYANT / DALLAS MORNING NEWS / CORBIS

The truth is that Obama’s speeches are full of engaging detail—just not policy detail. With his first book, the memoir *Dreams from My Father*, Obama proved he was a literary man of great skill, and he knows that the details that catch the attention are personal. So in his best speeches he offers quick, arresting portraits of individual Americans he has met in his travels. Taken together they help him execute a rhetorical pivot that only the greatest populist politicians—FDR in the 1930s, Reagan in 1980—have been able to pull off. You could call it optimistic despair. The overarching theme of Obama’s speeches, and of his campaign, is that America is a fetid sewer whose most glorious days lie just ahead, thanks to the endless ranks of pathetic losers who make it a beacon of hope to all mankind.

Here’s a partial list of the people that Obama has met lately. All of them are unhappy, and no wonder: Ashley, who grew up eating mustard sandwiches because her mother contracted cancer, lost her job, went bankrupt, and lost her health insurance; the “girl who goes to the crumbling school in Dillon”; “the mother who can’t get Medicaid to cover all the needs of her sick child”; a New Hampshire woman who “hasn’t been able to breathe since her nephew left for Iraq”; “the teacher who works another shift at Dunkin Donuts after school just to make ends meet”; “a young woman in Cedar Rapids who works the night shift after a full day of college and still can’t afford health care for a sister who’s ill”; “the Maytag worker who is now competing with his own teenager for a $7 an hour job at Wal-Mart.” And beyond these dim, huddled figures lies the American landscape, unbearably bleak: “shuttered factories,” “crumbling schools,” “a planet in peril.”

It’s not exactly Walt Whitman. But Obama wants us to know that the picture he paints with his pointillist precision is comprehensive: He’s leaving nothing out. He drives the point home when he concludes his litanies of despair by saying: “I have seen what America is.” In this sense Obama truly is the unity candidate. There is no white America or black America, as he says; no blue states or red states, in his famous formulation, but only the United States of America. And what unites all these people—what unites us—is our shared status as victims.

Unfortunately, this raises the question of who the victimizer is. It’s an uncomfortable question for a candidate who, having drawn such a depressing picture, wants to pivot toward the positive and upbeat and hopeful. Suddenly Obama’s gift for the identifying detail leaves him.

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With unaccustomed vagueness he refers to "lobbyists" and "overpaid CEOs" but never names them. It's a world without human villains, improbably enough. Who are the agents of this despair? By whose hand has the country been brought so low? Whoever they are, they vanish in the fog of sentences like this: "We are up against decades of bitter partisanship that cause politicians to demonize their opponents instead of coming together to make college affordable or energy cleaner." So not even politicians in power are responsible; it's decades of bitter partisanship that has forced them into demonization, and the demonization has in turn prevented them from getting things done.

This is a murky place. Cause and effect are blurred. Bad things happen though nobody does them. Instead we face disembodied entities, ghostly apparitions. "Make no mistake about what we're up against," he will announce, with what sounds, for a moment, like clarity; but then he goes on to say what we're up against: "the *belief* that it's okay for lobbyists to dominate our government"; "the *conventional thinking* that says your ability to lead as president comes from longevity in Washington"; "*forces* that feed the *habits* that prevent us from being who we want to be"; "the *idea* that it's acceptable to say anything and do anything to win an election."

Some agents of despair these turn out to be! A belief, a way of thinking, an idea, forces that feed habits, and decades of partisanship. He won't even bring himself to blame Republicans.

Why does Obama choose to conjure up these disembodied spirits as the obstacles to "change"? There are a couple of explanations. One possibility is that he won't credit actual, nameable persons with holding these beliefs because no actual person does hold these beliefs. Imagine a candidate whose platform said: Vote for me and I'll guarantee that "our government is dominated by lobbyists." Who's on record saying that it's okay to do anything to win an election? And it's hard to find anyone who subscribes to the "conventional thinking that says your ability to lead as president comes from longevity in Washington." Four of our last five presidents have been governors who never worked a day in Washington. And look where that got us.

When he tells his audiences they need 'a president who will tell you what you need to know, not what you want to hear,' he might be quoting, gulp, Geraldine Ferraro or Arnold Schwarzenegger, who used it when he ran for governor in 2003.

But this is not the best explanation for why Obama won't specify his opponents. He is partisan enough to believe, and certainly many of his supporters believe, that some villainous figure—Karl Rove, I suppose—does believe these things. But if Obama named anybody, the cat would be out of the bag. It would at last be plain that his politics of unity, his politics of "addition not subtraction," is simply another way of recasting the old "politics of us versus them" that he says he disdains.

Leave aside the disembodied forces; forget the beliefs and ideas that no one really holds. Somebody somewhere has to be preventing Obama's kind of health care reform, and sending kids to underfunded schools, and shipping jobs overseas to increase profits, and standing in the way of medical research, and downplaying climate change out of skepticism or general orneriness. Put them all together and it's likely to come to a fairly high number of people: stockholders, employees, and managers of globalized companies; insurance claim adjusters, guys on oil rigs, hog farmers, pro-lifers, moms in SUVs, taxpayers who decline to float bonds for local schools, voters who pulled the lever for President Bush and are still kindly disposed toward him. People who make red states red and blue states purple. Lots and lots of people.

If Obama made this explicit, if in his speeches he dared to wrap bodies around those disembodied forces, if he began to trace effects back to the agents that cause them, then his campaign would suddenly appear to be what it is: a conventional alignment of political interests, trying to seize power from another conventional alignment of political interests—just one more version of a tussle that's gone on since the country's founding. His fans, it turns out, aren't the people they've been waiting for; they're just the same old people, like everybody else.

Of course, they're drawn to his campaign precisely because they refuse to believe that this is so. Maybe Obama refuses to believe it too. He seems to be a sincere man, as I say. But he's also a very smart one. ♦

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Saddam's Dangerous Friends

What a Pentagon review of 600,000 Iraqi documents tells us.

By Stephen F. Hayes

This probably ought to be big news. Throughout the early and mid-1990s, Saddam Hussein actively supported an influential terrorist group headed by the man who is now al Qaeda's second-in-command, according to an exhaustive study issued last week by the Pentagon. "Saddam supported groups that either associated directly with al Qaeda (such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led at one time by bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri) or that generally shared al Qaeda's stated goals and objectives." According to the Pentagon study, Egyptian Islamic Jihad was one of many jihadist groups that Iraq's former dictator funded, trained, equipped, and armed.

The study was commissioned by the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, and produced by analysts at the Institute for Defense Analyses, a federally funded military think tank. It is entitled "Iraqi Perspectives Project: Saddam and Terrorism: Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents." The study is based on a review of some 600,000 documents captured in postwar Iraq. Those "documents" include letters, memos, computer files, audiotapes, and videotapes produced by Saddam Hussein's regime, especially his intelligence services. The analysis section of the study covers 59 pages. The appendices, which include copies of some of the captured documents and translations, put the entire study at approximately 1,600 pages.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

> The authors of the Pentagon study concluded that 'Captured documents reveal that the regime was willing to co-opt or support organizations it knew to be part of al Qaeda—as long as that organization's near-term goals supported Saddam's long-term vision.'

An abstract that describes the study reads, in part:

> Because Saddam's security organizations and Osama bin Laden's terrorist network operated with similar aims (at least in the short term), considerable overlap was inevitable when monitoring, contacting, financing, and training the same outside groups. This created both the appearance of and, in some way, a 'de facto' link between the organizations. At times, these organizations would work together in pursuit of shared goals but still maintain their autonomy and independence because of innate caution and mutual distrust. Though the execution of Iraqi terror plots was not always successful, evidence shows that Saddam's use of terrorist tactics and his support for terrorist groups remained strong up until the collapse of the regime.

Among the study's other notable findings:

¶ In 1993, as Osama bin Laden's fighters battled Americans in Somalia, Saddam Hussein personally ordered the formation of an Iraqi terrorist group to join the battle there.

¶ For more than two decades, the Iraqi regime trained non-Iraqi jihadists in training camps throughout Iraq.

¶ According to a 1993 internal Iraqi intelligence memo, the regime was supporting a secret Islamic Palestinian organization dedicated to "armed jihad against the Americans and Western interests."

¶ In the 1990s, Iraq's military intelligence directorate trained and equipped "Sudanese fighters."

¶ In 1998, the Iraqi regime offered "financial and moral support" to a new group of jihadists in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.

¶ In 2002, the year before the war began, the Iraqi regime hosted in Iraq a series of 13 conferences for non-Iraqi jihadist groups.

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¶ That same year, a branch of the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) issued hundreds of Iraqi passports for known terrorists.

There is much, much more. Documents reveal that the regime stockpiled bombmaking materials in Iraqi embassies around the world and targeted Western journalists for assassination. In July 2001, an Iraqi Intelligence agent described an al Qaeda affiliate in Bahrain, the Army of Muhammad, as "under the wings of bin Laden." Although the organization "is an offshoot of bin Laden," the fact that it has a different name "can be a way of camouflaging the organization." The agent is told to deal with the al Qaeda group according to "priorities previously established."

In describing the relations between the Army of Muhammad and the Iraqi regime, the authors of the Pentagon study come to this conclusion: "Captured documents reveal that the regime was willing to co-opt or support organizations it knew to be part of al Qaeda—as long as that organization's near-term goals supported Saddam's long-term vision."

As I said, this probably ought to be big news. And, in a way, it was. A headline in the *New York Times*, a cursory item in the *Washington Post*, and stories on NPR and ABC News reported that the study showed *no links* between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

How can a study offering an unprecedented look into the closed regime of a brutal dictator, with over 1,600 pages of "strong evidence that links the regime of Saddam Hussein to regional and global terrorism," in the words of its authors, receive a wave-of-the-hand dismissal from America's most prestigious news outlets? All it took was a leak to a gullible reporter, one misleading line in the study's executive summary, a boneheaded Pentagon press office, an incompetent White House, and widespread journalistic negligence.

A page from the Pentagon's new study analyzing captured Iraqi documents

demographic, spouting much the same rhetoric, and promoting a common historical narrative that promised a return to a glorious past. That these movements (pan-Arab and pan-Islamic) had many similarities and strategic parallels does not mean they saw themselves in that light. Nevertheless, these similarities created more than just the appearance of cooperation. Common interests, even without common cause, increased the aggregate terror threat.

B. The Terror "Business" Model of Saddam Hussein

Saddam's interest in, and support for, non-Iraqi non-state actors was spread across a wide variety of revolutionary, liberation, nationalist, and Islamic terrorist organizations. For years, Saddam maintained training camps for foreign "fighters" drawn from these diverse groups. In some cases, particularly for Palestinians, Saddam was also a strong financial supporter. Saddam supported groups that either associated directly with al Qaeda (such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led at one time by bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri) or that generally shared al Qaeda's stated goals and objectives.[97]

Saddam was a pragmatist when it came to personal and state relationships. He and many members of his regime understood that whatever the benefits of a relationship, there was always a potential for internal and external costs for associating too closely with some of these groups. Saddam's reaction to this concern often swung like a pendulum, from arresting members of Wahabi sects to "extending lines of relations" to a new radical Kurdish Islamic group.[98]

In one case, Iraq's ambassador in Switzerland, who was also Saddam's half-brother Barzan al-Tikriti, recommended that the Director of the IIS meet directly with an Egyptian who had strong connections to "Islamic parties and anti-Western Islamic organizations," and who was offering his assistance in brokering an alliance. But the director of the IIS department responsible for Arab issues did not concur with the ambassador's recommendation and cautioned in an internal memorandum that a meeting at such a level would "not serve the current Iraqi situation…and will make us lose our main target." He went on to note that working with the religious parties was dangerous at this time because they were

On Monday, March 10, 2008, Warren P. Strobel, a reporter from the McClatchy News Service first reported that the new Pentagon study was coming. "An exhaustive review of more than 600,000 Iraqi documents that were captured after the 2003 U.S. invasion has found no evidence that Saddam Hussein's regime had any operational links with Osama bin Laden's al Qaida terrorist network."

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McClatchy is a newspaper chain that serves many of America's largest cities. The national security reporters in its Washington bureau have earned a reputation as reliable outlets for anti-Bush administration spin on intelligence. Strobel quoted a "U.S. official familiar with the report" who told him that the search of Iraqi documents yielded no evidence of a "direct operational link" between Iraq and al Qaeda. Strobel used the rest of the article to attempt to demonstrate that this undermined the Bush administration's prewar claims with regard to Iraq and terrorism.

With the study not scheduled for release for two more days, this article shaped subsequent coverage, which was no doubt the leaker's purpose. Stories from other media outlets tracked McClatchy very closely but began to incorporate a highly misleading phrase taken from the executive summary: "This study found no 'smoking gun' (i.e. direct connection) between Saddam's Iraq and al Qaeda." This is how the *Washington Post* wrote it up:

> An examination of more than 600,000 Iraqi documents, audio and video records collected by U.S. forces since the March 2003 invasion has concluded that there is 'no smoking gun' supporting the Bush administration's prewar assertion of an 'operational relationship' between Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaeda terrorist network, sources familiar with the study said.

After the erroneous report from McClatchy, two officials involved with the study became very concerned about the misreporting of its contents. One of them said in an interview that he found the media coverage of the study 'disappointing.'

Much of the confusion might have been avoided if the Bush administration had done anything to promote the Pentagon study. An early version was provided to National Security Adviser Steve Hadley more than a year ago, before November 2006. In recent weeks, as the Pentagon handled the rollout of the study, Hadley was tasked with briefing President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. It's unclear whether he shared the study with President Bush, and NSC officials did not respond to repeated requests for comment. But sources close to Cheney say the vice president was blindsided.

After the erroneous report from McClatchy, two officials involved with the study became very concerned about the misreporting of its contents. One of them said in an interview that he found the media coverage of the study "disappointing." Another, James Lacey, expressed his concern in an email to Karen Finn in the Pentagon press office, who was handling the rollout of the study. On Tuesday, the day before it was scheduled for release, Lacey wrote: "1. The story has been leaked. 2. ABC News is doing a story based on the executive summary tonight. 3. The *Washington Post* is doing a story based on rumors they heard from ABC News. The document is being misrepresented. I recommend we put [it] out and on a website immediately."

Finn declined, saying that members of Congress had not been told the study was coming. "Despite the leak, there are Congressional notifications and then an official public release. This should not be posted on the web until these actions are complete."

Still under the misimpression that the Pentagon study undermined the case for war, McClatchy's Warren Strobel saw this bureaucratic infighting as a conspiracy to suppress the study:

> The Pentagon on Wednesday canceled plans for broad public release of a study that found no pre-Iraq war link between late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the al Qaida terrorist network. . . . The reversal highlighted the politically sensitive nature of its conclusions, which were first reported Monday by McClatchy.
>
> In making their case for invading Iraq in 2002 and 2003, President Bush and his top national security aides claimed that Saddam's regime had ties to Osama bin Laden's al Qaida terrorist network.
>
> But the study, based on more than 600,000 captured documents, including audio and video files, found that while Saddam sponsored terrorism, particularly against opponents of his regime and against Israel, there was no evidence of an al Qaida link.

An examination of the rest of the study makes the White House decision to ignore the Pentagon study even more curious. The first section explores "Terror as an Instrument of State Power" and describes documents detailing Fedayeen Saddam terrorist training camps in Iraq. Graduates of the terror training camps would be dispatched to sensitive sites to carry out their assassinations and bombings. In May 1999, the regime plotted an operation code-named "Blessed July" in which the top graduates of the terrorist training courses would be sent to London, Iran, and Kurdistan to conduct assassinations and bombings.

A separate set of documents presents, according to the Pentagon study, "evidence of logistical preparation for terrorist operations in other nations, including those in the West." In one letter, a director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) responds to a request from Saddam for an inventory of weapons stockpiled in Iraqi embassies throughout the world. The terrorist tools include missile launchers

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and missiles, "American missile launchers," explosive materials, TNT, plastic explosive charges, Kalashnikov rifles, and "booby-trapped suitcases."

The July 2002 Iraqi memo describes how these weapons were distributed to the operatives in embassies.

> Between the year 2000 and 2002 . . . explosive materials were transported to embassies outside Iraq for special work, upon the approval of the Director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service. The responsibility for these materials is in the hands of heads of stations. Some of these materials were transported in the political mail carriers [Diplomatic Pouch]. Some of these materials were transported by car in booby-trapped briefcases.

Saddam also recruited non-Iraqi jihadists to serve as suicide bombers on behalf of the Iraqi regime. According to the study, captured documents "indicate that as early as January 1998, the scheduling of suicide volunteers was routine enough to warrant not only a national-level policy letter but a formal schedule—during summer vacation—built around maximizing availability of Arab citizens in Iraq on Saddam-funded scholarships."

The second section of the Pentagon study concerns "State Relationships with Terrorist Groups." An IIS document dated March 18, 1993, lists nine terrorist "organizations that our agency [IIS] cooperates with and have relations with various elements in many parts of the Arab world and who also have the expertise to carry out assignments" on behalf of the regime. Several well-known Palestinian terrorist organizations make the list, including Abu Nidal's Fatah-Revolutionary Council and Abu Abbas's Palestinian Liberation Front. Another group, the secret "Renewal and Jihad Organization" is described this way in the Iraqi memo:

> It believes in armed jihad against the Americans and Western interests. They also believe our leader [Saddam Hussein], may God protect him, is the true leader in the war against the infidels. The organization's leaders live in Jordan . . . when they visited Iraq two months ago they demonstrated a willingness to carry out operations against American interests at any time.

Other groups listed in the Iraqi memo include the "Islamic Scholars Group" and the "Pakistan Scholars Group."

Throughout the new Pentagon study, passages from the source documents are displayed in translation. This one details an operation codenamed "Blessed July."

[Continued]

I would also like to go over here the orders that were issued by you during the first and second meetings with your Excellency, which lay the groundwork for the success of these operations.

Codename of the special operations is BLESSED JULY

The duties will be divided into two branches, which are:

A – Bombings

B – Assassinations

- The execution order for Jordan is canceled.
- Reminding members who are captured in the European area to use death capsules on themselves.

Execution Steps:

- Select 50 Fedayeen martyrs according to the required specifications.
- Admit them to the Intelligence School to prepare them for their duties.
- After passing their tests they will be selected for their targets as follows:
  - The top ten will work in the European field – London.
  - The second ten will work in the Iranian field.
  - The third ten will work in the self-ruled [Kurdish] area.

After passing the final test the Fedayeen will be sent as undercover passengers, each one according to his work site.[9]

An example of the kind of mission implied in the BLESSED JULY capability is documented in a series of memoranda from April 2000. The intended target was the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmad Chalabi. Using a forged passport, the Fedayeen volunteer was to travel through northern Iraq, making his way to London "for the purpose of executing a sanctimonious [sic] national duty which is eliminating the hostile agent Ahmad Chalabi."[10] The operation failed, in part, because the Iraqi agent failed to obtain a visa to enter the United Kingdom.

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There are two terrorist organizations on the Iraqi Intelligence list that deserve special consideration: the Afghani Islamic Party of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) of Ayman al Zawahiri.

This IIS document provides this description of the Afghani Islamic Party:

> It was founded in 1974 when its leader [Gulbuddin Hekmatyar] escaped from Afghanistan to Pakistan. It is considered one of the extreme political religious movements against the West, and one of the strongest Sunni parties in Afghanistan. The organization relies on financial support from Iraq and we have had good relations with Hikmatyar since 1989.

In his book *Holy War, Inc.*, Peter Bergen, a terrorism analyst who has long been skeptical of Iraq-al Qaeda connections, describes Hekmatyar as Osama bin Laden's "alter ego." Bergen writes: "Bin Laden and Hekmatyar worked closely together. During the early 1990s al-Qaeda's training camps in the Khost region of eastern Afghanistan were situated in an area controlled by Hekmatyar's party."

It's worth dwelling for a moment on that set of facts. An internal Iraqi Intelligence document reports that Iraqis have "good relations" with Hekmatyar and that his organization "relies on financial support from Iraq." At precisely the same time, Hekmatyar "worked closely" with Osama bin Laden and his Afghani Islamic Party hosted "al Qaeda's terrorist training camps" in eastern Afghanistan.

The IIS document also reveals that Saddam was funding another close ally of bin Laden, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization of Ayman al Zawahiri.

> In a meeting in the Sudan we agreed to renew our relations with the Islamic Jihad Organization in Egypt. Our information on the group is as follows:
> ¶ It was established in 1979.
> ¶ Its goal is to apply the Islamic shari'a law and establish Islamic rule.
> ¶ It is considered one of the most brutal Egyptian organizations. It carried out numerous successful operations, including the assassination of [Egyptian president Anwar] Sadat.
> ¶ We have previously met with the organization's representative and we agreed on a plan to carry out commando operations against the Egyptian regime.

Zawahiri arrived in Afghanistan in the mid-1980s, and "from the start he concentrated his efforts on getting close to bin Laden," according to Lawrence Wright, author of *The Looming Tower*. The leaders of EIJ quickly became leaders of bin Laden's organizations. "He soon succeeded in placing trusted members of Islamic Jihad in key positions around bin Laden," Wright reported in the definitive profile of Zawahiri, published in the *New Yorker* in September 2002. "According to the Islamist attorney Montasser al-Zayat, 'Zawahiri completely controlled bin Laden. The largest share of bin Laden's financial support went to Zawahiri and the Jihad organization.'"

Later, Wright describes Zawahiri's role in the founding of al Qaeda.

> Toward the end of 1989, a meeting took place in the Afghan town of Khost at a mujahideen camp. A Sudanese fighter named Jamal al-Fadl was among the participants, and he later testified about the event in a New York courtroom during one of the trials connected with the 1998 bombing of the American embassies in East Africa. According to Fadl, the meeting was attended by ten men—four or five of them Egyptians, including Zawahiri. Fadl told the court that the chairman of the meeting, an Iraqi known as Abu Ayoub, proposed the formation of a new organization that would wage jihad beyond the borders of Afghanistan. There was some dispute about the name, but ultimately the new organization came to be called Al Qaeda—the Base. The alliance was conceived as a loose affiliation among individual mujahideen and established groups, and was dominated by Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The ultimate boss, however, was Osama bin Laden, who held the checkbook.

In 1989, Ayman al Zawahiri attended the founding meeting of al Qaeda. He was literally present at the creation, and his Egyptian Islamic Jihad "dominated" the new organization headed by Osama bin Laden.

In the early 1990s, Zawahiri and bin Laden moved their operations to Sudan. After a fundraising trip to the United States in the spring of 1993, Zawahiri returned to Sudan where, again according to Wright, he "began working more closely with bin Laden, and most of the Egyptian members of Islamic Jihad went on the Al Qaeda payroll." Although some members of EIJ were skeptical of bin Laden and his global aspirations, Zawahiri sought a de facto merger with al Qaeda. One of his top assistants would later say Zawahiri had told him that "joining with bin Laden [was] the only solution to keeping the Jihad organization alive."

Once again, it's worth dwelling on these facts for a moment. In 1989, Ayman al Zawahiri attended the founding meeting of al Qaeda. He was literally present at the creation, and his EIJ "dominated" the new organization headed by Osama bin Laden.

At precisely the same time Zawahiri was "joining with bin Laden," the spring of 1993, he was being funded by

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Saddam Hussein's Iraq. As Zawahiri's jihadists trained in al Qaeda camps in Sudan, his representative to Iraq was planning "commando operations" against the Egyptian government with the IIS.

Another captured Iraqi document from early 1993 "reports on contact with a large number of terrorist groups in the region, including those that maintained an office or liaison in Iraq." In the same folder is a memo from Saddam Hussein to a member of his Revolutionary Council ordering the formation of "a group to start hunting Americans present on Arab soil, especially Somalia," where al Qaeda fighters were preparing to battle U.S. troops. A second memo to the director of the IIS instructs him to revise the plan for "operations inside Somalia."

More recently, captured "annual reports" of the IIS reveal support for terrorist organizations in the months leading up to the U.S. invasion in March 2003. According to the Pentagon study, "the IIS hosted thirteen conferences in 2002 for a number of Palestinian and other organizations, including delegations from the Islamic Jihad Movement and the Director General for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of al-Ahwaz." The same annual report "also notes that among the 699 passports, renewals and other official documentation that the IIS issued, many were issued to known members of terrorist organizations."

The Pentagon study goes on to describe captured documents that instruct the IIS to maintain contact with all manner of Arab movements and others that "reveal that later IIS activities went beyond just maintaining contact." Throughout the 1990s, the Iraqi regime's General Military Intelligence Directorate "was training Sudanese fighters inside Iraq."

The second section of the Pentagon study also discusses captured documents related to the Islamic Resistance organization in Kurdistan from 1998 and 1999. The documents show that the Iraqi regime provided "financial and moral support" to members of the group, which would later become part of the al Qaeda affiliate in the region, Ansar al Islam.

This page describes the 2002 annual report of the Iraqi Intelligence Services's M8 Directorate of Liberation Movements. The directorate hosted 13 conferences that year for delegations from Palestinian and other terrorist groups.

dering action in Somalia aimed at the American presence, Osama bin Laden was doing the same thing.[45]

Evidence of Saddam's continuing interest and support for global terrorist activities is found in a 2002 annual report of the IIS M8 Directorate of Liberation Movements. The first two-thirds of the report list all of the subjects of the 2002 intelligence reporting, ranging from commentary on various Western newspaper articles to information on the contacts with and support for various regional groups.[46]

But it is the last third of the report that is much more interesting. The IIS hosted thirteen conferences in 2002 for a number of Palestinian and other organizations, including delegations from the Islamic Jihad Movement and the Director General for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of al-Ahwaz.[47] The same document also lists messages that various terrorist groups sent to Saddam (37 messages), Saddam's Deputy (22), and Tariq Aziz (6). The titles of the message range from simple best wishes on Saddam's birthday to the following:

- Information on the number of Palestinian martyrs killed vs. Zionists killed.
- Requests for military equipment and for help for the families of suicide bombers.
- Information on (1) the financial status of various terrorist organizations, (2) the volunteers for suicide operations, and (3) rumors of a plan to assassinate Saddam Hussein.[48]

The M8 annual report also notes that among the 699 passports, renewals, and other official documentation that the IIS issued, many were issued to known members of terrorist organizations. Moreover, it states that the IIS took four million *dinars* from its own budget to finance Palestinian terrorist groups and a further ten million to support Iraqi-sponsored terrorist activities in Iran.[49]

The IIS also provides a list of activities that it considered "exemplary events," for example:

- Re-equipping and training Palestinian fighters in al-Quds training camps [in Iraq].

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The third section of the Pentagon study is called "Iraq and Terrorism: Three Cases." One of the cases is that of the Army of Muhammad, an al Qaeda affiliate in Bahrain. A series of memoranda order an Iraqi Intelligence operative in Bahrain to explore a relationship with its leaders. On July 9, 2001, the agent reports back: "Information available to us is that the group is under the wings of bin Laden. They receive their directions from Yemen. Their objectives are the same as bin Laden." Later, he lists the organization's objectives.

¶ Jihad in the name of God.
¶ Striking the embassies and other Jewish and American interests anywhere in the world.
¶ Attacking the American and British military bases in the Arab land.
¶ Striking American embassies and interests unless the Americans pull out their forces from the Arab lands and discontinue their support for Israel.
¶ Disrupting oil exports [to] the Americans from Arab countries and threatening tankers carrying oil to them.

A separate memo reveals that the Army of Muhammad has requested assistance from Iraq. The study authors summarize the response by writing, "the local IIS station has been told to deal with them in accordance with priorities previously established. The IIS agent goes on to inform the Director that 'this organization is an offshoot of bin Laden, but that their objectives are similar but with different names that can be a way of camouflaging the organization.'"

We never learn what those "previous priorities" were and thus what, if anything, came of these talks. But it is instructive that the operative in Bahrain understood the importance of disguising relations with al Qaeda and that the director of IIS, knowing that the group was affiliated with bin Laden and sought to attack Americans, seemed more interested in continuing the relationship than in ending it.

The fourth and final section of the Pentagon study is called "The Business of Terror." The authors write: "An example of indirect cooperation is the movement led by Osama bin Laden. During the 1990s, both Saddam and bin Laden wanted the West, particularly the United States, out of Muslim lands (or in the view of Saddam, the "Arab nation"). . . . In pursuit of their own separate but surprisingly 'parallel' visions, Saddam and bin Laden often found a common enemy in the United States."

They further note that Saddam's security organizations and bin Laden's network

> were recruiting within the same demographic, spouting much of the same rhetoric, and promoting a common historical narrative that promised a return to a glorious past. That these movements (pan-Arab and pan-Islamic) had many similarities and strategic parallels does not mean they saw themselves in that light. Nevertheless, these similarities created more than just the appearance of cooperation. Common interests, even without common cause, increased the aggregate terror threat.

As much as we have learned from this impressive collection of documents, it is only a fraction of what we will know in 10, 20, or 50 years. The authors themselves acknowledge the limits of their work.

In fact, there are several captured Iraqi documents that have been authenticated by the U.S. government that were not included in the study but add to the picture it sketches. One document, authenticated by the Defense Intelligence Agency and first reported on *60 Minutes*, is dated March 28, 1992. It describes Osama bin Laden as an Iraqi intelligence asset "in good contact" with the IIS station in Syria.

> In one folder is a memo from Saddam Hussein to a member of his Revolutionary Council ordering the formation of 'a group to start hunting Americans present on Arab soil, especially Somalia.'

Another Iraqi document, this one from the mid-1990s, was first reported in the *New York Times* on June 25, 2004. Authenticated by a Pentagon and intelligence working group, the document was titled "Iraqi Effort to Cooperate with Saudi Opposition Groups and Individuals." The working group concluded that it "corroborates and expands on previous reporting" on contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda. It revealed that a Sudanese government official met with Uday Hussein and the director of the IIS in 1994 and reported that bin Laden was willing to meet in Sudan. Bin Laden, according to the Iraqi document, was then "approached by our side" after "presidential approval" for the liaison was given. The former head of Iraqi Intelligence Directorate 4 met with bin Laden on February 19, 1995. The document further states that bin Laden "had some reservations about being labeled an Iraqi operative"—a comment that suggests the possibility had been discussed.

Bin Laden requested that Iraq's state-run television network broadcast anti-Saudi propaganda, and the document indicates that the Iraqis agreed to do this. The al Qaeda leader also proposed "joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia. There is no Iraqi response

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provided in the documents. When bin Laden left Sudan for Afghanistan in May 1996, the Iraqis sought "other channels through which to handle the relationship, in light of his current location." The IIS memo directs that "cooperation between the two organizations should be allowed to develop freely through discussion and agreement."

In another instance, the new Pentagon study makes reference to captured documents detailing the Iraqi relationship with Abu Sayyaf, the al Qaeda affiliate in the Philippines founded by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law. But the Pentagon study does not mention the most significant element of those documents, first reported in these pages. In a memo from Ambassador Salah Samarmad to the Secondary Policy Directorate of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, we learn that the Iraqi regime had been funding and equipping Abu Sayyaf, which had been responsible for a series of high-profile kidnappings. The ambassador informs Baghdad that such support had been suspended. "The kidnappers were formerly (from the previous year) receiving money and purchasing combat weapons. From now on we (IIS) are not giving them this opportunity and are not on speaking terms with them." That support would resume soon enough, and shortly before the war a high-ranking Iraqi diplomat named Hisham Hussein would be expelled from the Philippines after his cell phone number appeared on an Abu Sayyaf cell phone used to detonate a bomb.

What's happening here is obvious. Military historians and terrorism analysts are engaged in a good faith effort to review the captured documents from the Iraqi regime and provide a dispassionate, fact-based examination of Saddam Hussein's long support of jihadist terrorism. Most reporters don't care. They are trapped in a world where the Bush administration lied to the country about an Iraq-al Qaeda connection, and no amount of evidence to the contrary—not even the words of the fallen Iraqi regime itself—can convince them to reexamine their mistaken assumptions.

Bush administration officials, meanwhile, tell us that the Iraq war is the central front in the war on terror and that American national security depends on winning there. And yet they are too busy or too tired or too lazy to correct these fundamental misperceptions about the case for war in Iraq, the most important decision of the Bush presidency.

What good is the truth if nobody knows it? ♦

The document shown here presents "evidence of logistical preparation for terrorist operations in other nations."

Two other documents present evidence of logistical preparation for terrorist operations in other nations, including those in the West. It is not clear from these documents if these weapons were being staged for a specific purpose or stockpiled for future contingencies. **Extract 2** is a response from the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) to a letter from Saddam asking for a list of weapons available in Iraqi embassies overseas.

Extract 2

[July 2002]

Subject: Weapons Information:

1. We would like to inform you of the following:

Romania –	Missile launcher and missile
Athens [Greece] –	Explosive charges
Vienna [Austria] –	Explosive charges, rifles with silencers, hand grenades, and Kalashnikov rifles
Pakistan –	Explosive materials of TNT
India –	Plastic explosive charges and booby-trapped suitcases
Thailand –	Plastic explosive charges and booby-trapped suitcases
Prague [Czech] –	Missile launcher and missile
Turkey –	Missile launcher, missile, and pistols with silencers
Sana'a [Yemen] –	Missile launcher, missile, plastic explosives and explosive charges
Baku [Azerbaijan] –	American missile launcher, plastic explosives and booby-trapped suitcases
Beirut [Lebanon] –	American missile launcher, plastic explosives and booby-trapped suitcases
Gulf nations –	Explosive material outside the embassies

2. Between the year 2000 and 2002 … explosive materials were transported to the embassies outside Iraq for special work, upon the approval of the Director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service. The responsibility for these materials is in the hands of heads of stations. Some of these materials were transported in the political mail carriers [Diplomatic Pouch]. Some of these materials were transported by car in booby-trapped briefcases."

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Five Years On

The war for Iraq and its larger lessons

By Jules Crittenden

The war started with an odd bit of air turbulence just before dawn. A waffling and whining noise, ironically enough. Hardly remarkable. Anyone who wasn't listening for it might have missed it.

I had just woken up on the Kuwait-Iraq border in a sleeping bag laid out on an armored vehicle's lowered ramp. I looked at my watch. It was 0429 hours on March 20, 2003. George W. Bush's deadline for Saddam Hussein to quit Iraq had passed half an hour earlier.

On the desert floor, our miles-long armored column was parked directly under the air corridor the Tomahawk cruise missiles would travel to Baghdad. Colonel David Perkins, commander of the 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, had informed us they'd fly 350 feet over our heads. A few minutes later, I heard them.

They were otherworldly, like ghosts in flight. They'd be arriving in Baghdad shortly, lighting up the palace district with dramatic effect for the world to see on CNN. It sounded like 20 of them. When the last one had past, I burrowed back into my sleeping bag to doze a little more before stand-to was called.

We would arrive where those missiles were going in 19 days, after an epic movement through Iraq's western desert and combat along the Euphrates and Tigris, filthy and transformed by our experiences. I was a reporter embedded with A Company of the 4/64 Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. Designated to lead the assault on Saddam's seat of power on April 7, 2003, our armored column attacked Baghdad at dawn. No one expected to see dusk. What we expected was Mogadishu writ large. The Americans would win, that was indisputable. But we, the first in, embarked on it without expectation of survival. We prepared to make a good run of it, stripping soft gear off the outside of the Bradley that might burn if we got hit, loading up on water and ammo. Smitty, the Bradley's 20-year-old radio operator, was bounced to make room for a psyops soldier and the amplifiers that would blast the "surrender" messages. Smitty was angry.

"I don't wanna stay back!" he said.

"Smitty," I said. "We're gonna get f—ing killed. You get to live. Be happy."

"If y'all gonna get killed, I wanna get killed with you," Smitty said.

Captain Wolford, the company commander, told me later that he was praying when he fell asleep and praying when he woke up that morning. "I had never done that before," he said.

I was the only one in the company who had a choice in the matter. But the question of whether to ride with one's friends, when one has a job to do, when one has made a commitment, is not much of a question at all. There was heavy fire that day and for two days after. A lot of people died. But not us. We lived, and learned some of the many lessons that war has to offer.

Things rarely happen as expected. Once you start, you have to finish. You don't get to be the same again. There is nothing much good about any of it, but winning is better than losing. And there is no such thing as a safe place to which you can withdraw. The fate of two reporters demonstrated that last point when they chose not to accompany the assault into Baghdad, considering it too dangerous. They were killed along with three American soldiers when an Iraqi missile struck the brigade's field headquarters south of Baghdad. Two cameramen, believing themselves safe in Baghdad's Hotel Palestine, were killed the next day when American tankers, my friends, mistook them for Iraqi forward artillery observers and fired.

We're five years into the war in Iraq now. Nearly 4,000 Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis have been killed. Thousands more Americans and Iraqis have seen their lives shattered in what became the premier killing zone of a global war. But death and combat no longer make the front pages; the drama has been bled out of it, and the war has taken a back seat in the presidential campaign. Rather than maturing in time of war, the American people seem eager to put it out of mind.

After 1989, we were encouraged to believe that war was history. This illusion made the shock of 9/11 all the worse. Even then some people wanted to believe it was an aberration, something we had brought on ourselves and could fix with kind words and deeds. The ease of the Taliban's ouster then created the false impression that we

Jules Crittenden is an editor at the Boston Herald *and blogs at julescrittenden.com.*

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A tank from the 3rd Infantry Division drives over a disabled vehicle in northern Baghdad on April 6, 2003.

DAVID LEESON / DALLAS MORNING NEWS / CORBIS

had managed to reinvent war in a more palatable form.

In fact, all we've managed to do as a nation over six-and-a-half years of war is confuse ourselves. This is not a simple war to understand, and it has been going on for decades. It has expressed itself with everything from low-grade terrorism to conventional war to nuclear threats, across multiple continents, and with many, seemingly unconnected, adversaries. Just the part of it we call the Iraq war has involved many different, and not always distinct, adversaries in numerous, overlapping conflicts. Faced with this kind of complexity, it isn't so surprising that vague messages of "hope" and "change" resonate with the American public, and politicians vie for the right to own those terms.

The shallowness of the debate suggests our nation is in danger of failing the test of our time. The abstract circumstances of cause and consequence in this war have fostered an avoidance of reality in some quarters—and at some of the highest levels of our leadership, often quite nakedly for purposes of political gain. Would-be leaders would rather play to emotions than make the hard calculations that adulthood forces on us.

Iraq has become the central battlefield in the 21st century's Islamic war, and may have been destined to be, with or without us. Lying geographically, ideologically, and culturally athwart the Middle East, rich in resources and boiling with rage long before we got there, it is the place where the war will either be settled or truly begun. It is a fitting role for the cradle of civilization to host a war in which the very progress of civilization is being challenged.

While there were terrible errors made in going to war in Iraq, the decision to go to war was not one of them.

Saddam Hussein convinced the world he had active weapons programs. The evidence now suggests he didn't, but how active his programs were, ultimately, is irrelevant. He had demonstrated his desire to dominate the region. Our European allies were eager to do business with him despite their own intelligence reports. Absent any containment, there was potential for more terrible and far-reaching wars. It was inevitable that Iraq would undergo a post-Saddam power struggle with massive ethnic conflict and with interference by Iran and Syria. The question was, and remains, how much influence we would wield in that event.

Five years on, the threat Saddam Hussein posed to

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regional stability—global stability, if you consider the resources he sought to control—has been neutralized. The toll in American and Iraqi lives to date may well have averted a far worse toll, though we can yet get the full accounting if we withdraw precipitously. The deadly influence of Iran remains limited by our presence in Iraq and by the still somewhat credible threat to use force against its nuclear ambitions. Iraqi genocide and the remaking of the map of the Middle East to the benefit of the Islamic Republic of Iran remain potent what-ifs.

The side benefits of the 2003 invasion included a briefly more compliant Iran and capitulation by Libya. The beacon of democracy shined, with successful, if sometimes problematic, democracies emerging in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon and with democratic movements making gains elsewhere in the Islamic world. Even the Palestinians had a crack at it and have learned that choices come with consequences. Those parties most threatened by civil order find themselves increasingly marginalized within the larger Islamic world, from Hamas in Gaza, to Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon, to the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan is only the most recent case of renewed democracy producing a victory over Islamism in elections supported by the United States—despite the widespread resentment of America's alliance with Pervez Musharraf, a seemingly contradictory situation that underscores the difficulty of our task in this war.

Those Americans who have sneered at these fits and starts of democracy are experiencing their own domestic political frustrations. Democrats are demanding more political cohesion from Iraq and Pakistan than they've been able to manage themselves. As Congress presses for disengagement with no practicable plan, we learn—thanks to the candor of a departing foreign policy adviser—that the leading Democratic candidate has no plan whatsoever for his campaign's central plank of withdrawal from Iraq.

The errors committed in this war have contributed greatly to American frustrations. There was a failure to recognize the extent of the challenge ahead, even as ambitious plans were being laid starting in late 2001. The Bush administration could have had a blank check and recruits lined up around the block, but instead insisted on taking us into war with a post-Cold War military that is only belatedly being built up. The administration failed to seize control of Iraq with sufficient urgency and, when a complex insurgency was well underway, failed to move with sufficient skill to quell it until late in the day. The greater failure was to not adequately communicate the mission to Americans and to the world.

All wars go through evolutions, and it is unrealistic to expect no missteps. In this case, however, they are cited most frequently not as arguments to improve the war effort, but as excuses for abandonment. The Bush administration has made good at last with a counterinsurgency strategy that has hobbled Al Qaeda in Iraq and has the Shiite militias in a box. Iraqi military capabilities are improving, and the next president appears likely to inherit a somewhat pacified, reconciled Iraq; an enhanced American position of influence in the Middle East; opposing terrorist organizations that are sharply compromised; and a string of nascent democracies. At considerable cost of American blood and treasure, the United States is now in a position of marked if precarious influence in the most dangerous part of the world. The new president will have to consider how much of that he or she wants to throw away or build upon.

The antiwar camp and their candidates hold a childish hope that our problems will just go away if we withdraw. They argue that Iraq was an artificial cause, that our presence fuels violence and our departure will end it, that Iran can be a helpful partner in this process, and that al Qaeda can be fought from afar. They desire nothing but a return to the innocence we enjoyed before September 11, 2001, ignoring the fact that our enemies had been emboldened by decades of American demurring, disengagement, and half measures.

The American people have been allowed to believe that getting out of Vietnam was the best thing we did there, and that there was no penalty for cutting our losses. It should not be surprising that so many believe the same of Iraq. Looking past the immediate victims of that historic abandonment, the Soviet Union was emboldened by our show of weakness, invading Afghanistan and triggering a fateful string of events. Iran, seized by Islamic zealots, staged the 1979 hostage crisis to kick off three decades of support for terrorism and a bid for regional domination. In both cases, the belligerents knew we would do nothing about it. Figures like Osama bin Laden, among others, noted this void, and created the circumstances we are currently compelled to address.

The United States has commitments to Iraq and the larger region and a pressing interest in the defense of free and open societies. If we avoid our responsibilities we simply plant the seeds of further conflict. The pressing question of the 2008 presidential campaign is whether the part of this global war that began five years ago will be prosecuted to a satisfactory conclusion, or whether the effort to end the Iraq war will be marked by a different kind of waffling, whining noise than that one I heard at dawn five years ago, followed by more devastating explosions. ♦

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President Bush greeting victims of Hurricane Katrina, September 2005

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Ideal Government

But is it conservative? BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

This well written and engaging memoir from former White House speechwriter Michael Gerson offers a strong defense of administration policies and a you-are-there perspective on some of the most important decisions and utterances made by President Bush in his first six years in office.

Along the way, Gerson also reveals the novel ideological character of Bush's presidency, as well as the limits of his approach to governing. Moreover, his account goes out of its way to confirm the fears of earlier writers who have attacked the president for being an "imposter" conservative. It is an apology for the administration that unapologetically defends the administration's most unconservative aspects.

Matthew Continetti, associate editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* The K Street Gang: The Rise and Fall of the Republican Machine.

As Gerson writes, "It is fair to ask: In what sense is this approach of mine conservative?" It is a good question. Gerson calls his approach "idealism," which he contrasts with the "noble pessimism" of "traditional conservatism." And it is worth studying his approach, since its most prominent adherent, according to Gerson, is George W. Bush himself.

Heroic Conservatism
Why Republicans Need to Embrace America's Ideals (And Why They Deserve to Fail If They Don't)
by Michael Gerson
HarperOne, 320 pp., $26.95

Gerson's idealism has two parts. The first, "idealism abroad," concerns the "promotion of liberty and hope" as "alternatives to hatred and bitterness." The second, "idealism at home," involves a "determination to care for the weak and vulnerable" while healing "racial divisions" by the "expansion of opportunity." Idealism is *not* the "ideology of minimal government," nor is it the "rigid secularization" that endangers "one of the main sources of social justice in American history," religious faith.

Furthermore, idealism itself is endangered. Currently there is a "backlash" against it. Some on the right seek to replace idealism abroad with "realist" policies which are "deeply skeptical" that "other countries can sustain democracy." Others want to "get back" to what they see as the "real business" of conservatism: "cutting government." Gerson does not like these people. He saw their governing vision at work "in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina," when the "administration found men and women who had never had a bank account." Such a problem—"so clearly rooted in governmentally enforced oppression"—requires an "active response by government."

If all this sounds to you remarkably like Democratic talking points circa

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2005—that somehow an emphasis on individual responsibility rather than government dependency causes human suffering—you are right. Democrats emerge from *Heroic Conservatism* relatively unscathed. True, Gerson criticizes their party's abortion policies, its secularism, its view that "ethical relativism is the only answer to moral arrogance," and its lack of serious ideas about how to confront the nightmarish "combination of Islamic radicalism and proliferation." But he saves his real ire for those conservatives, if they exist, who do not hold the "radical belief in the rights of every individual" and a "conviction" that government "must act"—"when appropriate"—to "secure those rights when they are assaulted by oppression, poverty, and disease."

Nor does Gerson hold his fire on those "conservative critics" who enjoy the "severe pleasure of cutting food stamps," who seek "steep reductions in foreign assistance," and who wanted to pay "the costs of Katrina" by "postponing or ending the Medicare prescription-drug benefit." He blames the "weak, uncreative policy" of the now-forgotten 2004 State of the Union address on "budget concerns" caused by the "internal triumph of conventional Republican thinking." He rejects the idea that the Bush administration's budgets were excessively large; he found them "frustratingly restrictive."

Gerson contrasts "traditional conservatism" with his own "heroic conservatism." Yet heroic conservatism, he writes, also has a tradition behind it. This is the legacy of "religiously motivated reform." Gerson's political hero is William Wilberforce, the "witty, eloquent, conservative member of parliament" in the early 19th century whose "Christian faith led to a moral revulsion at slavery so intense and physical" that it "nearly destroyed his health." Wilberforce led a successful crusade to end the British slave trade. Similarly, President Bush, with Gerson at his side, has led crusades to end tyranny, poverty, and disease.

Today's "idealism," Gerson writes, is the 21st-century version of Wilberforce's religiously based moralism. But there is a more recent antecedent to heroic conservatism. The marshaling of government resources to combat social ills is a pretty good description of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, and there is a substantial historical record measuring its results, for better or worse. But Gerson does not examine this record. He says only that President Bush "knew that Americans did not seek or desire to undo the Great Society."

William Wilberforce

Some may blanch at Gerson's politics, thinking him overly pious and self-righteous. But they would be wrong to do so. For Gerson is not only correct when he points out the long history of spiritually inspired reform movements; he is also right to argue that the politics of such movements are, more often than not, necessary, humane, reasoned, and just contributions to democratic debate in a constitutional republic. And that's not all Gerson's right about: There really *are* cynics in our public life, folks who argue that only certain states and peoples are "ready" for democracy (often the same folks who sing the virtues of "guided democracy" or "soft authoritarianism"), who belittle the Bush administration's declaration of war on terror as an "overreaction" to the September 11, 2001, attacks, and who disguise cheap partisanship as "reason," "science," or "reality-based" public policy. These people are called liberals.

The problem with Gerson's approach is that he routinely confuses prudential policy questions with matters of personal character. This tendency began early, back in 1999, when Gerson helped Bush define the latter's philosophy of "compassionate conservatism." The necessity of "compassionate conservatism" presupposes that there is a non-compassionate conservatism—and if the words have any meaning, non-compassionate conservatives, rather than simply holding views on public policy with which Gerson and Bush disagree, lack virtue.

In *Heroic Conservatism*, Gerson specifically targets "libertarian indifference to the poor." But this is a caricature. I know a few libertarians, and none of them are indifferent to poverty. They just think economic growth and self-reliance are more effective than the federal government at lifting families out of destitution. Thinking so does not make them unvirtuous people, and it doesn't strengthen public debate to suggest as much.

This same tendency was present during the debate over immigration reform. White House officials, including the president, occasionally insinuated that opponents of the administration's efforts to extend amnesty to 12 million illegal aliens without doing much to stop the inflow of illegal labor were xenophobes and nativists. No doubt some of those opponents were exactly that. But not the large majority, which was perfectly willing to debate the administration on policy, rather than personal, grounds.

More recently, when presidential candidate Fred Thompson told a questioner (who wanted to know whether he supported the president's African AIDS initiative) that "the government has its role" in fighting disease but we also

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"need to keep firmly in mind" the "role of us as individuals and Christians," Gerson went ballistic. In a *Washington Post* column he accused Thompson of picking on the "most vulnerable people on the planet," of "playing to isolationist sentiments," of possessing "shallow" theological knowledge, and of reflecting an "anti-government extremism." Not least, he suggested that Thompson lacked "moral seriousness." Support for the president's African AIDS policy, Gerson wrote, is an "expression of compassion and empathy" evincing a "serious conception of America's role in the world."

End of discussion. Say otherwise, and you'll find your motivations attacked, just like Fred Thompson.

Such an allergy to meaningful debate weakens one's persuasive abilities. It limits the scope of one's arguments. Because every issue is personalized, none can be debated impartially. Because the "idealist" or "compassionate conservative" believes he occupies the moral high ground, all counter-arguments are beneath him. And because the root of all disagreement—and thus the root of all politics—is the other side's character flaws, rhetoric is quickly reduced to name-calling.

Of course, it doesn't have to be this way. There are reasons other than heart-tugging anecdotes and appeals to personal virtue to support parts of Gerson's program. The strongest sections of *Heroic Conservatism* are his detailed, plainly written, step-by-step explications of the Bush Doctrine and the decision to invade Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein. Elsewhere, Gerson writes handy expositions of Catholic social doctrine—ideas like subsidiarity and solidarity—which give us insight into Bush's domestic policy, and provide a reasonable basis for allowing religion some space in our public life.

One day there will be a defense of a "compassionate" or "strong-government" conservatism that will articulate its public-policy rationale without calling its opponents small-minded, cruel, extremist, indifferent, or shallow. Such a book is probably being written now, in fact. I can't wait to read it. Call me an idealist. ♦

Philosophy Made Simple

Maybe too simple—when philosophers are reduced to one question. **BY PAUL HOLLANDER**

I approached this volume with high expectations, given my admiration for Kolakowski's work (testified to by the very positive reviews I have written in the past, one of them on these pages). I had hoped, among other things, to gain access to an enlightening summary of the central ideas of the philosophers discussed, and corresponding insights into the essential and durable themes of Western philosophy.

Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?
23 Questions From Great Philosophers
by Leszek Kolakowski
Translated by Agneszka Kolakowska
Basic Books, 223 pp., $20

I further expected that the preoccupations of the great thinkers would help to better grasp the dilemmas and difficulties of modernity—in short, some discussion of why the ideas of these philosophers matter, here and now.

It would have been illuminating and helpful if Kolakowski had raised in each chapter the question that concludes his discussion of Nietzsche: "Can we find any meaning to our existence in the Nietzschean chaos, any way to live in the belief that life is worth living?" You could, of course, substitute for "Nietzschean chaos" "Augustinian chaos," or "Hegelian" or "Kantian," and other precepts or propositions examined here.

"Can we find any meaning in . . ." applied across-the-board *could* have been the key question that Kolakowski does *not* raise in the rest of his book.

Instead, this is a fragmented collection of stabs at the views of these philosophers and, especially, their grapplings with the existence of God and some basic issues of epistemology. Particularly regrettable is the absence of a conclusion, or summation of the major themes and propositions dissected. This makes a reviewer's task difficult, since he cannot discuss the author's views of each of the 23 philosophers. And the lucidity of Kolakowski's exposition is greatly (and often unhelpfully) influenced by the questionable clarity of some of the authors he examines.

Of course, he cannot be blamed for not making crystal clear the murkier ideas of Saint Augustine, Bergson, Hegel, or Kierkegaard. An observation he makes about Edmund Husserl applies to several of the authors discussed: "It is hard to talk about Husserl without recourse to his own terminology, for his writings teem with neologisms."

These terminologies often interfere with clarity and understanding. The modern reader is also likely to have some trouble absorbing some of the observations of Saint Augustine, such as this one:

> We can see the traces of God in our souls directly, because the soul is where the truth resides. This truth is not . . . a remembrance of something once learnt—in a previous existence—and later forgotten; it is the good with which we are born, with which God created us. And because we are capable of grasping eternal, immutable truths, we are also capable to grasp that we too, are immortal; for the soul, since it is the receptacle of eternal truths, understands its own participation

Paul Hollander is the author, most recently, of The End of Commitment: Intellectuals, Revolutionaries and Political Morality.

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> in the eternal order. Our reason sees that its ability to grasp eternal truths was not created by its own powers but comes from that source which itself is the truth and the highest good.

It is no small task to summarize the key contributions and questions raised by 23 philosophers "who opened up new directions of thought for future generations." They're not grouped in any way, but listed more or less chronologically, beginning with Socrates (469-399 B.C.) and ending with Husserl (1859-1938). In the original work, first published in Polish, there were an additional seven, removed at the publisher's request to save space. Apparently Kolakowski had to undertake the unenviable task of excising Aristotle, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Hobbes, Heidegger, Jaspers, and Plotinus. Space does not permit to list the 23 retained, but there seems to be a preponderance of thinkers preoccupied with the existence of God, or at any rate a focus on issues of religion.

I would have liked to know what criteria Kolakowski used for selecting these philosophers, especially in light of the omission of such figures as Aristotle, Bacon, Bentham, Erasmus, James, Marx, Mill, Rousseau, and Russell, among others. In his short introduction Kolakowski notes that he did not intend to provide "some sort of a super-condensed textbook, encyclopaedia or dictionary" but wished "to approach these great philosophers by concentrating on one idea in the thought of each—an important idea, an idea that was fundamental" to his philosophy.

The title offers a further clue. Kolakowski, himself a religious believer, suggests that "there is something rather than nothing," and I assume that this "something" is an allusion to God, divinity, or the supernatural. At the same time, while discussing the views of these philosophers, Kolakowski does not exactly make a case for religious belief, or the existence of God; he seems to take it for granted.

Leszek Kolakowski

The original Polish edition included an additional seven philosophers; Kolakowski had to undertake the unenviable task of excising Aristotle, Meister Eckhart, Nicolas of Cusa, Hobbes, Heidegger, Jaspers, and Plotinus.

There is also an occasional coyness in his reluctance to take a position about the propositions and beliefs under examination here. For example, he writes this about St. Anselm:

> Finally there is the most general question suggested by Anselm. . . .It concerns his famous sentence: 'I do not desire to understand in order to believe; I believe in order to understand.' . . . [H]e did not try to make faith dependent on the validity of his arguments; on the contrary he insisted . . . that faith precedes them all. The question that arises . . . is this: Is it irrational to believe in God if we know that there is no reliable evidence—evidence of the kind that can withstand scientific scrutiny—of His presence? And if it is irrational what does 'irrational' mean here?

Well, has it not been axiomatic that faith is independent of (if not outright antithetical to) reason? And if so, is it worth rediscussing? (Tertullian famously proposed, "*Credo quia absurdum*.") Regardless of who gets the credit for the originality of this venerable idea, the reader would like to know what Leszek Kolakowski thinks about the matter, especially given those ironic quotation marks around the word irrational, and his own convictions are only occasionally glimpsed, as at the end of his summary of the thoughts of Epictetus:

> Cultivating a Stoic indifference to twists of fate and unexpected material losses, viewing one's life as one would view a film, is probably a good strategy for living; far better . . . than the feverish pursuit of so-called success, fame and riches—a pursuit that in most cases is fruitless. . . . But would such indifference be a good and desirable thing if it were total, all-encompassing? Should we really aspire to remain untroubled and unmoved by death and suffering? Could we really find happiness in such indifference? And would it enrich our lives? Or would it, on the contrary, impoverish them? Are ordinary human emotions—love and compassion, sadness and joy—simply proof of our ignorance and immaturity . . . ? [I]t seems that . . . the perfect Stoic is a rarity, a freak, a monstrosity.

While few, whether believers or non-believers, would quarrel with such sentiments, *Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?* raises far more questions than it answers. And the major, nagging question this survey of thinkers has inspired in me is this: Could so many of these writer-philosophers be as abstruse and irrelevant as they seem to be, or have our intellectual sensibilities coarsened to such a degree that we cannot grasp the importance of their thoughts? ♦

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Leon Fleisher, Brian Wilson, and Diana Ross, December 2, 2007

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI / GETTY IMAGES

One Hand Clapping

Leon Fleisher isn't the first rude White House guest.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Some weeks ago the esteemed pianist Leon Fleisher wrote an op-ed piece for the *Washington Post* discussing the moral qualms that assailed him when he was honored at the Kennedy Center. Fleisher, a onetime child prodigy who lost the use of his right hand at age 37 and did not perform the two-handed repertory again for three decades, had no problems accepting the Kennedy Center Honors *per se*. But he was sickened by the idea of attending a White House reception on the afternoon of the event. His presence, he feared, might lend legitimacy to an administration guilty of a "systematic shredding of our nation's Constitution."

Still, not wishing to upstage or embarrass co-honorees Diana Ross and Steve Martin, Fleisher finally decided to attend the reception wearing a peace medallion and purple ribbon, thereby registering his revulsion for President Bush, but doing so in tasteful fashion.

Fleisher, by the looks of it, is unaware that many top-flight classical musicians have found themselves in similar situations over the years. Some followed in Fleisher's steps and showed up at the White House wearing regalia protesting this or that policy: Aaron Copland once wore black pajamas to protest the war in Vietnam, while Rudolf Serkin donned a Zorro costume in a quixotic protest against American support for Franco's regime in Spain. But most musicians, rather than visiting the White House and then wringing their hands about it in the *Post*, simply refused the invitation outright.

Oddly enough, outrage at the systematic shredding of the Constitution has rarely been the reason cited for staying home. In 1954, when Arturo Toscanini rebuffed an invitation to dine with Dwight D. Eisenhower, many thought he did so out of pique, mortified that a collection of Ike's favorite pieces of classical music had outsold Toscanini's latest release, *Donizetti for Young Lovers*. But this was not the case. The *maestro* turned down the invitation because he was fed up with the U.S. tax structure.

"Even in the worst days of Il Duce," Toscanini fumed to the old Washington *Evening Star*, "taxes on capital gains never exceeded 39 percent. To go out night after night, squeezing every ounce of beauty out of the most beloved classics in the Western canon for a bunch of ingrates, and then having to fork over 90 percent of my hard-earned income, is bad enough. But having to pay an even more outrageous tax when I prune my portfolio is appalling! If I was smart enough to buy Kodak at 6¼, why should I get hosed when I unload it at 105?"

Outrage at a confiscatory tax structure was also the *casus belli* when Eugene Ormandy, Antal Doráti, and the great Serge Koussevitzky turned down invitations to dine at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Vladimir Horowitz, by contrast, gave the White House the thumbs-down in 1949 because of anger at the Security & Exchange Commission's uptick rule. This rule, designed to thwart short sellers, required market makers to sell stocks at a price at least fractionally higher than that of the last sale. Horowitz, who got caught in a short squeeze involving IBM, never forgave Harry Truman for the disaster.

"The philosophical linchpin of any credible securities market is giving the investor the opportunity to purchase a stock at a price that reflects its actual worth," the pianist ranted to the *New York Times*. "By maintaining this antiquated uptick rule, a sop to the longs, the SEC has created a fanciful market that bears no relationship to reality. Not only will I never come dine at the White House, I will go out of my way to ridicule the president's crummy piano playing at every opportunity. As for his daughter, the aspiring chantoozey, I've heard backfiring trucks that sound better!"

Popular mythology holds that White House invitations have mostly been spurned because of lofty moral considerations, usually involving opposition

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Queenan Country: A Reluctant Anglophile's Pilgrimage to the Mother Country.

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to a war. But this is not true. Mario Lanza sent back his invitation to a White House Easter Egg Hunt in 1957 because of dissatisfaction with the winner-take-all strictures that govern the Electoral College.

"The policy of awarding all of a state's electoral votes to one candidate may work well from a procedural point of view," the populist singer subsequently explained. "But by disenfranchising a large and sometimes vocal minority, the rule worsens the problem it is intended to solve. So no, Mr. Ike: No canapés, please, for the Singing Truck Driver!"

The list of classical performers who have thumbed their noses at presidents goes on and on. Robert Merrill said ixnay to Richard Nixon in 1971 in retaliation for the administration's onerous wage and price controls. Glenn Gould gave Gerald Ford the thumbs-down because of opposition to his Whip Inflation Now policies. And it was the line-item veto that persuaded Leonard Bernstein that he could not break bread with Lyndon Johnson.

"The war in Vietnam I could tolerate," Bernstein later told *Le Monde*. "The whole guns-and-butter thing I could hold my nose at. But when Johnson refused to give in on the line-item veto, I didn't want anything to do with the guy. I'd rather die a thousand deaths than show up at the White House for dinner knowing that the president was screwing the whole country with the line-item veto. I'd never be able to show my face on Martha's Vineyard!"

Finally, there is the curious case of Pablo Casals, who was so enraged at Jimmy Carter's draconian energy policies that he left these shores for good.

"It's hard enough to play the cello at my age when the weather's nice," he explained to the *New Yorker* in 1979. "But the last time I was over at the White House, Carter was going around in his parka and electric mittens, turning all the thermometers down to 62. Chronic arthritis may be not be the most principled reason for turning down an invitation to dine with the president, but in this case, it will have to do!" ♦

Hollywood High

At $27,000 a year, girls learn a lesson or two.

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

This book, a back-patting history by cofounder Diana Meehan, of the early years (if you can call the 1990s "early") of the Archer School for Girls in Brentwood, California—yes, *that* Brentwood, where O.J. killed Nicole, if he did it—comes with jacket raves by Arianna Huffington, the late Betty Friedan, and Brooke Shields. Three of my favorite people! Plus Tom Hanks, whose daughter graduated from Archer. Hanks says that if you enroll at Archer, you'll "one day rule our city-state and the world."

Learning Like a Girl
Educating Our Daughters in Schools of Their Own
by Diana Meehan
PublicAffairs, 324 pp., $24.95

You'd better, because your parents are going to be out a hell of a lot of dough. At $27,200 in tuition a year, plus a $2,180 mandatory "transportation fee," plus God knows what else, Archer, founded in 1995, appears to be the most expensive private day school in Los Angeles, beating out long-established all-girls Marlborough in Hancock Park ($25,250 a year) as well as the co-ed, ultra-prestigious Harvard-Westlake in Bel Air and North Hollywood (a mere $25,000). At Archer, though, at least according to Meehan, you get something extra that could well be worth that top dollar: total immersion in the "different voice" philosophy of Carol Gilligan, the feminist theorist who believes that girls, unlike boys, are gentle creatures who shy away from competition, whether in academics or in sports, and who would rather (in Meehan's words) "be part of a caring community" where they "compete with one eye on the emotional reactions of others, caring about feelings as much as winning." The watchwords at Archer, says Meehan, are "cooperative," "progressive," "connected learning," and of course, "caring."

"A caring community is a good place to learn," writes Meehan, and "a caring community is also a place to heal." Hence the title of her book: *Learning Like a Girl.*

Meehan gives us an example (and I'm quoting her word-for-word) of the way girls, in contrast to boys, use both hemispheres of their brains to tackle math problems: "*If a train leaves Chicago and another leaves Baltimore, both going sixty miles an hour, when will they crash*? 'WAIT. WAIT!' say the girl mathematicians. 'Are there families on those trains? Are there animals? Why can't we stop the trains?'"

The first thought that passed through my own brain's two hemispheres when I read this was: Don't worry, girls—even in the heyday of the B&O Railroad, there never was a direct run between Baltimore and Chicago, much less one in which two trains traveling at high speed in opposite directions shared the same track. My second thought was: Didn't Larry Summers say something like this a couple of years ago? Isn't that why he's no longer president of Harvard?

Learning Like a Girl is crammed with this sort of giddiness, even though Meehan seems to have a Ph.D. in something or other and boasts a career as an award-winning documentary filmmaker (mostly films about—you guessed it—women). When I got to this paragraph, on page 46, I started counting the pages until the end (only 278 to go!) and wondering whether the publisher, PublicAffairs Books, was a vanity press. It's not, but you can't help but think that some

Charlotte Allen is the author, most recently, of The Human Christ.

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of its editors might have been on that Chicago-Baltimore train:

> Jim McManus [a veteran girls'-school administrator who served as consultant for Archer during its formative months] is a prudent man. This is confirmed by his wardrobe, which is invariably khaki trousers, Oxford shirt, and Irish tweed jacket with the narrow shoulders popular in the 1960s, and before that in the 1940s, and, I think, 1920s. He wears this outfit irrespective of the temperature, which is often warm, as if clothes were meant to be all-terrain, all-weather garments in which one can climb Everest in the manner of Sir Edmund Hillary, or take tea, also in the manner of Sir Edmund Hillary.

Hmmm. Edmund Hillary scaling the Himalayas in a tweed jacket. There's a name for this kind of prose; it's called writing like a girl.

Then there's the story of how Archer got its name, after a living-room brainstorming session at which Meehan and her female friends ("lawyers and poets, therapists and grandmothers") munched on pita pockets, picked out the colors for the school uniforms (as the McManus passage indicates, attire plays an important role in this book) and decided it was okay to call it a "girls'" school even though the word "girls" was kind of politically incorrect. One of Meehan's friends, Archer cofounder Vicky Shorr (described in an appendix as "fluent in Portuguese and Joan of Arc") announced that she had had a 3 A.M. vision of Isabel Archer, the "independent young woman" (Shorr's words) who was the heroine of Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*. Now, I haven't looked at *Portrait of a Lady* since my college freshman English class, but I do recall that Isabel, in James's ironic molding, was so "independent" that she was something of a fool, throwing over a handsome and decent American suitor for a foppish poseur (and fortune-hunter and adulterer) who was also an American but had adopted a pretentious European veneer designed to appeal to naive and culturally aspiring young ladies of means like Isabel. (You might say that he was the John F. Kerry of his time.)

Well, at least the poets and therapists didn't give Archer the name they'd originally picked out for the school:

Glasgow High School for Girls, 1955

JOHN MURRAY / PICTURE POST / GETTY IMAGES

Adelphi. As one of Meehan's friends explained at the wine-and-pita party, "*Adelphi* means 'sister' in Greek." Actually not; it's a Latinization of the Greek word for "brothers."

Meehan describes herself and her husband, screenwriter/producer Gary David Goldberg, as "ex-hippies and granola-crunchers" who dress in tie-dye (or at least did back then) and live the simple bohemian life. Maybe so, but they are ex-hippies who made really good (more power to them, of course), because the only action in *Learning Like a Girl* that doesn't take place in Los Angeles's ultra-affluent Westside (Beverly Hills and beyond) consists of the daily commutes that Archer's scholarship students make by bus from their ethnically "diverse" neighborhoods in down-market, heavily minority South-Central Los Angeles.

At its founding, Archer occupied a congeries of vacant commercial space in Pacific Palisades, just south of Malibu, then moved in 1999 to its present location, an eight-acre former Eastern Star retirement home of strikingly handsome Spanish Revival architecture on Sunset Boulevard.

"People here do stuff that is essentially inventive," writes Meehan of her fellow movie types and the other high-salaried symbolic analysts who are her Westside neighbors. *Learning Like a Girl* is sprinkled with the dropped names of Meehan's Hollywood and political pals who gave Archer its initial boost: Not only Hanks and Friedan, but also Kate Capshaw, Frances Lear, Barbara Boxer, Pat Schroeder, ex-Texas governor Ann Richards, and Nancy Daly Riordan, wife of the former Los Angeles mayor.

Archer got started after the formerly all-girls Westlake School in Bel Air, where one of the Meehan-Goldberg daughters had matriculated (that fills in the picture of the Meehan-Goldberg family finances), merged in 1991 with the formerly all-boys Harvard School to become coeducational. The merger outraged the Gilligan-saturated Meehan, who had a younger daughter she'd planned to send to Westlake and, apparently, quite a few other Westlake parents and alums. And so Archer was born.

Learning Like a Girl chronicles its growing pains: fights with various homeowners' groups in Brentwood who objected to the large concentration of teen-agers, "Lucy" the dud first headmistress who showed up at the school's opening in an "all-white suit and sunglasses" (oops—after Labor Day, I guess), and the financial problems that can beset even the highest-tuition schools.

You have to give Meehan, Shorr, and the third Archer cofounder, Megan Callaway, credit for pulling the whole thing off. It's one thing to sit in your living room talking about starting your own prep school from scratch, especially a school that plans to compete at the

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Noon break at the Archer School for Girls

very top of the market, and it's another thing to follow through. (In an appendix, Meehan offers some useful tips for would-be school founders on how to stay afloat and avoid some of the crazies who will inevitably attach themselves to this kind of project—although I wish she hadn't insisted on analogizing the process to the flights of Canada geese over her summer home in Vermont.) And I came to quite like Gary Goldberg, who, onetime granola-cruncher though he might be, informed one of his daughters, according to his wife, that the writing assignment she planned to turn in at her "permissive" elementary school was substandard.

The daughter's response: "I feel good about myself, that's all that matters."

"Actually, it's not," replied her father. A man after my own heart.

Although a little Carol Gilligan goes a long way with me—as does a little of another of Meehan's heroines, Mary (*Reviving Ophelia*) Pipher—I actually agree wholeheartedly on the value of single-sex education, although I tend, *contra* Meehan, to believe that it is boys, not girls, who are the more "shortchanged" (a favorite Meehan word) these days by co-ed schools, where there is all too much stress on "caring," "cooperation," and other female-centric notions that make boys gag, and rightly so.

Learning in a school environment specifically geared to the differences in the ways in which the two sexes' brains and bodies function can benefit many young people, especially when they don't have to face daily distractions from the opposite sex at a time of extreme adolescent self-consciousness coupled with extreme adolescent hormonal surges.

My problem is that I myself attended a single-sex private day school in the very Los Angeles *haut*-prep setting about which Meehan writes. Indeed, my alma mater, the Mayfield Senior School in Pasadena, receives a passing mention in her book (in my day, and perhaps now as well, Westlake, Marlborough, and their ilk were our cross-town athletic rivals). During the years of my attendance, Mayfield was operated by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, a marvelously snobbish order of Catholic nuns that figured, I am proud to say, in Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy. Later on, the 1960s took their toll on the good sisters, who doffed their habits and jumped almost *en masse* over the wall. Mayfield briefly turned into a hippie school of a kind that would have delighted the youthful Meehan-Goldbergs, then crawled back to sobriety.

One of the chief lessons I learned as a student at an all-girls school was to cast a jaundiced eye on glib assertions about girls' superior "caring" and "connected" qualities. True, the girls at my school weren't especially competitive academically (because most hadn't the slightest interest in academics) but they were murderously competitive in the fields that matter most to girls: looks, clothes, boys, and the accoutrements of wealth and status possessed by their families. This remains true, even in this day of obeisance to supposed feminist sisterhood, as Curtis Sittenfeld's best-selling novel *Prep* notes in excruciatingly observant detail.

All in all, though, you could do worse than send your daughter to Archer; it looks like a very good school. It has to be because, in the end, after all the rhetoric about "connected" and "integrated" and "progressive" learning is over, high-end prep schools, single-sex and co-ed alike, live or die on the number of graduates they send to Yale and Princeton. Visit Archer's website, and you will see the same stiff (and fundamentally traditional) academic standards that you'll see at the websites for Harvard-Westlake, or for St. Paul's, or for the Dwight School in Manhattan that Paris Hilton briefly attended: four years of English, three years of a foreign language, etc.

You'll see the same photos, too: wholesomely attractive young people hailing from a diverse ethnic spectrum and poised over books, computers, test tubes, and soccer balls. There will be the same genteel liberal politics, the same do-good "service" requirements for graduation, the same scholarships for impoverished minorities. Whatever Diana Meehan's personal arithmetic challenges might be, the math and science at Archer are as rigorous as they are anywhere else in the rarified world of the Ivy League scramble.

What would drive me crazy about Archer, though, would be never getting away from the I-Am-Woman-Hear-Me-Roar, 24/7. Would we always have to name the robot we built in robotics class "Hypatia"? Do we have to take a class in "media literacy," in which we learn that Barbie dolls symbolize "the culture of continual consumption"? After the umpteenth interdisciplinary seminar on Cleopatra, I'd be asking: Can't we please have an interdisciplinary seminar on Antony? And I'd be thinking about transferring to, oh, say, a boys' school. ♦

ANNE CUSACK / LOS ANGELES TIMES

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Say What?

Anthony Lewis contemplates the First Amendment.

BY GABRIEL SCHOENFELD

In 1969, Anthony Lewis, already a veteran *New York Times* reporter, was given a column on the newspaper's op-ed page, a pulpit from which he preached left-wing fire and brimstone for more than two decades until his retirement in 2001. But Lewis did not withdraw to the shores of Lake Wobegon, or wherever it is that arch-liberals go to live out the remainder of their days. He stayed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he has continued writing books between teaching stints at the Columbia School of Journalism and Harvard Law School.

Freedom for the Thought That We Hate
A Biography of the First Amendment
by Anthony Lewis
Basic Books, 221 pp., $25

One subject to which he has been passionately devoted for decades is the First Amendment. In his *Make No Law* (1991) he explored in considerable depth the law of libel, as defined by the landmark 1964 *New York Times* v. *Sullivan* case. Now he is back with *Freedom for the Thought That We Hate*, a more general treatment of court cases involving freedom of speech and the press. With only 189 pages of text set in large type, it is a cursory treatment of central topics rather than a sustained analysis. Nonetheless, as a gauge of where liberal opinion stands on some hot constitutional issues, it is of more than passing interest.

In today's America, there is near-universal commitment to "the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open"—the famous words of the Supreme Court in *Sullivan*. But throughout our history, as Lewis reminds us, the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment have come under threat. Indeed in 1798, seven years after the Bill of Rights was ratified, Congress passed the Sedition Act, banning "any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States."

That nasty and brutish era was mercifully short; it came to an end when Thomas Jefferson took office in 1801. But American history has been punctuated by successive episodes in which our freedom to debate has been far less than uninhibited, robust, and wide-open. Nevertheless, the larger arc of liberty across more than two centuries has been thrusting upward and outward. If Congress made it a crime to write maliciously about the federal government in 1798, today Americans are perfectly free to call our president a war criminal, praise terrorists who slaughter their fellow citizens, publish classified diplomatic and military secrets, and purchase pornography 24/7 at any 7-Eleven. Anthony Lewis chronicles both the larger shift and the occasional backsliding in this *Biography of the First Amendment.*

Superficial though the volume may be, the subject matter is consistently engaging. One does not easily tire of hearing stories like that of William Sidis, born in 1898 and forcibly turned into a child prodigy by his father, a psychologist in the grip of twisted ideas. With intense public interest focusing on him when he entered Harvard at age 11, Sidis was soon to decline as precipitously as he had ascended. As an adult, he wrapped himself in anonymity, spending his days engaged in his hobby of collecting subway transfer tickets, about which he wrote a book. But in 1937 Sidis's veil of obscurity was pierced by an essay in the the *New Yorker* that recounted what had become of him in remorselessly derisive terms.

Sidis sued for violation of privacy. The case rose to the U.S. Court of Appeals, but even as all sympathy, judicial and public, was with the *New Yorker*'s pathetic victim, he lost on the merits. The court ruled that revelations of this nature must be allowed unless they were "so intimate and so unwarranted in view of the victim's position as to outrage the community's notions of decency."

Two imperatives had collided—the right to privacy and freedom of the press—and one had to yield. Although Lewis sides with the court's judgment here, freedom of the press, in his view, should not be a right that trumps all others:

> It does not follow—not for me, at any rate—that an open society must allow the publication of private facts no matter how cruel or antisocial the publication would be.

This is only one of several junctures in which the principle of unfettered speech sits uncomfortably with other liberal desiderata, and that clash of concepts points to a significant division within liberalism. For if liberals formerly regarded themselves as unswerving guardians of the First Amendment, defending it from threats from the political right leveled in the name of patriotism (laws banning flag burning) or national security (laws imposing loyalty oaths) today a growing number of liberals want to limit free speech in the name of a left-liberal agenda.

To be sure, this is by no means an entirely new trend; certain feminists, for example, have long been ardent supporters of banning pornography, joining forces with conservative traditionalists in support of obscenity laws. But it is noteworthy when a mainstream liberal like Anthony Lewis joins in to relegate free speech to second place.

Campaign finance reform is a shining example. Lewis is hardly alone among liberals in being deeply troubled by the way money washes around politics, and he supports efforts to dry up the flow, frowning upon the Supreme Court's 1976 ruling in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* that political spending and political

Gabriel Schoenfeld is senior editor of Commentary.

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speech are essentially one and the same. Remarkably, in certain electoral contexts, Lewis favors banning political speech altogether! In 2002, the Supreme Court considered a Minnesota law proscribing judges and would-be judges from setting forth their views on policy questions (such as abortion) during election campaigns. Lewis supported that highly restrictive law and calls the Court's decision to strike it down an "egregious misapplication of the First Amendment, treating it woodenly and ignoring the realities involved."

By no means do all of Lewis's departures from free-speech orthodoxy fall neatly along left/right lines. He has, for example, come to regard Supreme Court rulings on hate speech as too tolerant. But in raising this issue, he is not making the case for things like campus speech codes, which he derides for their political correctness. Rather, the phenomenon he aims to combat is terrorist incitement. Current law protects all speech except that which is likely to bring about "imminent" lawlessness. In light of the bombings of the London and Madrid subways by fanatical Muslims, Lewis would go further: "I think we should be able to punish speech that urges terrorist violence to an audience some of whose members are ready to act on the urging." Actual evidence of "imminent" lawlessness need not (in his view) be required.

There is certainly something startling, even refreshing, in the way Lewis wanders off the reservation on this and other matters. But there is something disconcerting about the larger worldview in which they are embedded. Like so many other journalists of his generation, Lewis appears to be trapped forever in the Vietnam/Watergate era. Government, especially when it is under Republican control, appears to him to be at all times concealing illicit conduct abroad and engaged in depredations against civil liberties at home. In this eternally Nixonian world, the press, "with all of its defects, is often the only defense against the abuse of power."

Trial of John Peter Zenger, 1735

More than three decades have passed since the highly anomalous presidency of Richard Nixon. And wholly apart from the changes wrought by the passage of time, in the aftermath of 9/11 we dwell in a very different kind of place, facing a new and dangerous set of challenges. Lewis acknowledges this momentous transformation in his discussion of terrorist incitement. But in his treatment of other core national-security issues (government secrecy, for example) he remains a prisoner of the past. In response to September 11, he records with indignation, the Bush administration

> worked to exclude press scrutiny—and hence public accountability—by the most sweeping secrecy in American history. Even documents that had long been public were recalled and classified. Journalists who succeeded in exposing secret measures like the wiretapping order were threatened with prosecution for espionage.

There is a word for such a distorted description of events: It is called caricature, and it serves in this instance to inhibit serious thinking—including thinking by Lewis himself—about the complex problem of handling classified and unclassified information (such as blueprints of tunnels and bridges and airports) at a moment when our open society was, and remains, uniquely vulnerable.

You can readily grant Anthony Lewis the point that in the war on terrorism—and long before the war on terrorism—the government had overclassified and misclassified information, sometimes out of bureaucratic sloppiness, sometimes to conceal malfeasance. You can also go further and acknowledge that, over two centuries of American history, far worse abuses of power and violations of civil liberties have occurred in response to real and imagined foreign dangers. But you get the sense that Lewis would never concede that there should be *any* limits, based upon the requirements of national security, on what the press is free to report. That is, beyond the narrow exception set forth in the 1931 *Near* decision, in which the Supreme Court held that the government has the power to forbid, even by prior restraint, the publication of ultrasensitive information like "the sailing dates of transports or the number or location of troops."

More than three-quarters of a century has passed since the *Near* case was decided, and if read literally, it is obsolete. The *New York Times*, taking the lead among American newspapers, has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to splash secrets, including operational details about intelligence sources and methods, across its front pages. But in the danger this poses to American lives, the disclosure of information about highly classified counterterrorism programs is the modern equivalent of publishing the sailing dates of transport ships. Even if the government cannot show that the extreme step of prior restraint is a justified response to such recklessness, are there no circumstances under which it could punish such conduct after the fact?

Unfortunately, that is not a question Anthony Lewis deigns to discuss—although he makes plain that his answer is no. The lacuna is a pity. Lewis clearly knows a great deal about the First Amendment, and the reader is left curious about exactly what kind of argument he would mount if he engaged this issue with any depth beyond caricature. ♦

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The Space Race

Remembering Sputnik Autumn. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

This is the golden age of the documentary, at least financially, which only serves to demonstrate what a crock the entire genre is and always has been. A documentary purports to be an accounting of history, or a work of reportorial journalism, but what it most often resembles is a secular Calvinist sermon—an accounting of sins that concludes with either a demand for expiation, a warning of hellfire, or a defeated resignation at the power of evil.

Sputnik Mania
Directed by David Hoffman

And the more entertaining the sermon of damnation, the more it uses the baubles and bangles of filmmaking, the more questionable and problematic it becomes. A responsible documentary is a bore. An entertaining documentary is a crude polemic that turns opposing arguments into vulgar caricatures of themselves for the entertainment of the folks in the pews.

The founder of Priceline.com, Jay Walker, has put up the money for a documentary called *Sputnik Mania*, which is a portrait of the year that followed the surprise launch of the first spacecraft. The director, David Hoffman, has been at this game so long that some forgotten film he made 40 years ago beat out *Easy Rider* for a prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Hoffman is old enough to have lived through 1957-58 as an adult with a strong memory of the emotions of the day. But he is not so old that he hasn't learned the latest in documentary techniques, and they certainly enliven his storytelling. *Sputnik Mania* is full of desktop special effects—old newspapers appearing in animated form, that sort of thing—courtesy of the Avid editing system. He scoured eBay and YouTube for interesting clips.

The footage is terrific. There's a commercial for a new cigarette called Laika in honor of the first space traveler—a dog who went up in the second Sputnik. As Hoffman tells it, Laika became an international celebrity and figure of great good cheer until it dawned on people that Laika wasn't going to come down to earth alive. At which point the joy turned to horror. Hoffman shows a snippet of an actress named Estelle Taylor (the ex-wife of Jack Dempsey, imdb.com tells me) making a weepy proto-PETA speech about Laika's fate: "We can only pray that God will be merciful and speed the end."

Hoffman has also unearthed man-on-the-street television interviews in which New Yorkers along Fifth Avenue react to the news that the Soviet Union has outdistanced the United States in space. As always with such images, one is struck by the formality with which people dressed half-a-century ago, and also by their earnestness—their unsmiling determination to say something serious. The contrast between their manner and the smiling, ironic tone and speaking manner of today's TV person-on-the-street is staggering.

But *Sputnik Mania* isn't a movie about how people dressed and talked to a camera in 1957, nor is it a nostalgic study of black-and-white cigarette commercials. It's about the American reaction to the challenge posed by the Soviet triumph in space. And yet Hoffman expects us to react to the far more serious material he shows us with the same attitude of enlightened amusement that we bring to watching a TV ad in which someone delightedly blows smoke right at the camera. How retrogressive. How dated. How silly.

Those people on Fifth Avenue, for example. Look at them: Worried about the Soviet threat, when we now know that, 44 years later, the Soviet Union would collapse entirely! We can see that their fear is real, but we know they had nothing to fear.

The same is true of the footage offered in *Sputnik Mania* of Democrats who railed against President Eisenhower because Ike had allowed the Soviets to achieve superiority in the skies on his watch. We see Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn saying that "America has been humiliated" by Sputnik. Senator Lyndon Johnson is quoted as saying, "Soon the Russians will be dropping bombs on us from space the way kids drop rocks on cars from a highway overpass." Henry (Scoop) Jackson says that Western civilization hangs in the balance.

Hoffman and his cowriters, Paul Dickson and Lindsey Palatino, set Eisenhower against them. They portray Ike as serenely unconcerned with the military threat posed by the Soviet space-rocket program, and far more worried about the American military's hunger to militarize the upper atmosphere. He is joined in his concern (according to them) by none other than Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier. They prominently feature an interview with Khrushchev's son Sergei, in which Sergei claims that his father didn't want lots of nuclear weapons and that his interest in developing rockets with the ability to carry nuclear warheads was purely and entirely defensive.

Well, that's all very nice, and it fits in with the notion that anybody who ever believes the United States is under threat is either a dupe of the powers-that-be or a moron. But it is so absurd that it hardly even bears discussion. Hoffman takes tiny bits of fact—Eisenhower's insistence on dividing the space and nuclear programs to keep them out of Pentagon hands—and extrapolates wildly from them to create one of those old-time revisionist histories of the Cold War that went out of fashion at the same time as shoulder pads and neon.

Evidently they're due for a revival. And where better to revive it than the documentary, whose primary subject is the enduring sinfulness of America? ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"It was their sacrifices, the sacrifices of a truck driver in Michigan, of a housewife who sold her wedding ring on eBay and gave the contribution to the campaign, a janitor in Alabama who has a wife in a wheelchair who gave $20, not out of his abundance, but out of his poverty, so that our campaign could stay on the track."

—Mike Huckabee, March 4, 2008

Parody

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Candidates Heighten Search For 'Most Pathetic American'

Convention Speeches to Mention the Lackadaisical, Obese, and Morons

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

After former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee cited a woman who sold her wedding ring in order to contribute to his now failed campaign, the remaining presidential candidates have ratcheted up their own search for the most despondent person living in America. Or the most pathetic. The results have been impressive.

At a paper mill in Scranton, Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee, spoke of a woman who saved money by wearing clothes made of old newspapers, but who also cares about the environment. "My friends, that woman is here tonight and by the end of my speech will recycle those old papers and be completely naked."

Meanwhile, in Harrisburg, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton referred to a supporter "who weighs 600 pounds because his health insurance provider won't cover his diet plan and who ate himself out of his home and lived inside a dumpster behind an Arby's and who, facing suffocation, managed to eat his way out of that dumpster over a period of three days and was able to call out for help. Had he not been in the habit of eating so much, he might not be with us today. But his experience mattered. He didn't just hope to escape from his filth, he took action."

Emma Delhaas for Worldwide Image

Hugh Jazz once ate his way out of a dumpster and called for help. The Clinton supporter says if the phone rings at 3 a.m., he hopes it's the pizza delivery guy.

And at a fundraising dinner in Philadelphia, Senator Barack Obama said he admired "the intense passion of a Texas man who, despite suffering from a serious bout of irritable bowel syndrome, drove himself to the polling station, ran inside, and told election officials that he had to go—and vote for me. But there were other matters pressing on him. The people told him he cannot do both. But much to their dismay and the dismay of the local custodian, he said 'Yes, I can,' and suddenly

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Navy Missile Destroyed More Than Satellite: Large Floating Space Mirror Also Shattered

By THOM SHANKER

WASHINGTON — Pentagon officials today acknowledged that besides striking an American spy satellite, a Navy missile interceptor also destroyed what appeared to be a large floating mirror that contained three individuals who are now wreaking havoc in the southern United States.

Addressing what were described [illegible] mors of supervillains" [illegible] appeared

Eyewitnesses described the two men and one woman as possessing superhuman abilities but were not so much frightened as embarrassed for them. "How can you take these guys seriously with those vinyl dresses, slicked-back hair, and plastic boots, not to mention the really bad acting?" asked a Texas sheriff. Another man told the three that "looking Goth was so yesterday" before getting vaporized by the clearly irritated [illegible]

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